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**INSTITUTES**  
**OF THE**  
**CHRISTIAN RELIGION.**

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CHRISTIAN RELIGION



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INSTITUTES  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BY  
JOHN CALVIN.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN, AND COLLATED WITH  
THE AUTHOR'S LAST EDITION IN FRENCH,

By JOHN ALLEN.

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Non tamen omnino potuit mors invida totum  
Tollere Calvinum terris ; æterna manebunt  
Ingenui monumenta tui : et livoris iniqui  
Languida paulatim cum flamma resederit, omnes  
Religio qua pura nitet se fundet in oras  
Fama tui.

BUCHANAN. POEMAT.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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# CONTENTS.

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## BOOK IV.

- CHAP. I. The true Church, and the Necessity of our Union with her, being the Mother of all the Pious.
- CHAP. II. The True and False Church compared.
- CHAP. III. The Teachers and Ministers of the Church, their Election and Office.
- CHAP. IV. The State of the ancient Church, and the Mode of Government practised before the Papacy.
- CHAP. V. The ancient Form of Government entirely subverted by the Papal Tyranny.
- CHAP. VI. The Primacy of the Roman See.
- CHAP. VII. The Rise and Progress of the Papal Power to its present Eminence attended with the Loss of Liberty to the Church and the Ruin of all Moderation.
- CHAP. VIII. The Power of the Church respecting Articles of Faith, and its licentious Perversion under the Papacy, to the Corruption of all Purity of Doctrine.
- CHAP. IX. Councils ; their Authority.
- CHAP. X. The Power of Legislation, in which the Pope and his Adherents have most cruelly tyrannized over the Minds and tortured the Bodies of Men.
- CHAP. XI. The Jurisdiction of the Church, and its Abuse under the Papacy.
- CHAP. XII. The Discipline of the Church ; its principal Use in Censures and Excommunication.
- CHAP. XIII. Vows ; the Misery of rashly making them.
- CHAP. XIV. The Sacraments.



CHAP. XV. Baptism.

CHAP. XVI. Pædobaptism perfectly consistent with the Institution of Christ, and the Nature of the Sign.

CHAP. XVII. The Lord's Supper, and its Advantages.

CHAP. XVIII. The Papal Mass not only a sacrilegious Profanation of the Lord's Supper, but a total Annihilation of it.

CHAP. XIX. The Five other Ceremonies, falsely called Sacraments, proved not to be Sacraments: their true Nature explained.

CHAP. XX. On Civil Government.

## BOOK IV.

*On the external Means or Aids by which God calls us into Communion with Christ, and retains us in it.*

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### ARGUMENT.

**THREE** parts of the Apostles' Creed, respecting God the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, have been explained in the former books. This last book is an exposition of what remains, relating to the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints.

The chapters contained in it may be conveniently arranged in three grand divisions :

- I. The Church.
- II. The Sacraments.
- III. Civil Government.

The First Division, extending to the end of the thirteenth chapter, contains many particulars, which, however, may all be referred to four principal heads.

- I. The marks of the Church, or the criteria by which it may be distinguished, in order to our cultivation of union with it—Chap. I. II.
- II. The government of the church—Chap. III.—VII.
  1. The order of government in the church—Chap. III.
  2. The form practised by the ancient Christians—Chap. IV.
  3. The nature of the present ecclesiastical government under the Papacy—Chap. V. The primacy of the Pope—Chap. VI. And the degrees of his advancement to this tyrannical power—Chap. VII.
- III. The power of the church—Chap. VIII.—XI.
  1. Relating to articles of faith,—which resides either in the respective bishops—Chap. VIII.—or in the church at large, represented in councils—Chap. IX.
  2. In making laws—Chap. X.
  3. In ecclesiastical jurisdiction—Chap. XI.

## ARGUMENT.

IV. The discipline of the church—Chap. XII. XIII.

1. The principal use of it—Chap. XII.

2. The abuse of it—Chap. XIII.

The Second Division, relating to the Sacraments, contains three parts.

I. The sacraments in general—Chap. XIV.

II. Each sacrament in particular—Chap. XV.—XVIII.

1. Baptism—Chap. XV. Distinct discussion of Pædobaptism—Chap. XVI.

2. The Lord's Supper—Chap. XVII.—and its profanation—Chap. XVIII.

III. The five other ceremonies, falsely called sacraments—Chap. XIX.

The Third Division regards civil government.

I. This government in general.

II. Its respective branches.

1. The magistrates.

2. The laws.

3. The people.



# INSTITUTES

## OF THE

### CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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#### BOOK IV.

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#### CHAPTER I.

*The true Church, and the Necessity of our Union with her,  
being the Mother of all the Pious.*

**T**HAT by the faith of the Gospel Christ becomes ours, and we become partakers of the salvation procured by him, and of eternal happiness, has been explained in the preceding Book. But as our ignorance and slothfulness, and, I may add, the vanity of our minds, require external aids, in order to the production of faith in our hearts, and its increase and progressive advance even to its completion, God hath provided such aids in compassion to our infirmity : and that the preaching of the Gospel might be maintained, he hath deposited this treasure with the Church. He hath appointed pastors and teachers, that his people might be taught by their lips ; he hath invested them with authority ; in short, he hath omitted nothing that could contribute to a holy unity of faith, and to the establishment of good order. (a) First of all, he hath instituted Sacraments, which we know by experience to be means of the greatest utility for the nourishment and support of our faith. For as during our confinement in the prison of our flesh, we have not yet attained to the state of angels, God hath in his wonderful providence accommodated himself to our capacity, by prescribing a way in which we might approach him notwithstanding our im-

(a) Ephes. iv. 11—16.

mense distance from him. Wherefore the order of instruction requires us now to treat of the Church and its government, orders, and power; secondly, of the Sacraments; and lastly, of Civil Government: and at the same time to call off the pious readers from the abuses of the Papacy, by which Satan has corrupted every thing that God had appointed to be instrumental to our salvation. I shall begin with the Church, in whose bosom it is God's will that all his children should be collected, not only to be nourished by her assistance and ministry during their infancy and childhood, but also to be governed by her maternal care, till they attain a mature age, and at length reach the end of their faith. For it is not lawful to "put asunder" those things "which God hath joined together;" (b) that the Church is the mother of all those who have him for their Father; and that not only under the law, but since the coming of Christ also, according to the testimony of the apostle, who declares the new and heavenly Jerusalem to be "the mother of us all." (c)

II. That article of the Creed, in which we profess to believe **THE CHURCH**, refers not only to the visible Church of which we are now speaking, but likewise to all the elect of God, including the dead as well as the living. The word **BELIEVE** is used, because it is often impossible to discover any difference between the children of God and the ungodly; between his peculiar flock and wild beasts. The particle **IN**, interpolated by many, is not supported by any probable reason. I confess that it is generally adopted at present, and is not destitute of the suffrage of antiquity, being found in the Nicene Creed, as it is transmitted to us in ecclesiastical history. Yet it is evident from the writings of the Fathers, that it was anciently admitted without controversy to say, "I believe the Church," not "*in* the Church." For not only is this word not used by Augustine and the ancient writer of the work "On the Exposition of the Creed," which passes under the name of Cyprian, but they particularly remark that there would be an impropriety in the expression, if this preposition were inserted; and they confirm their opinion by no trivial reason.

(b) Mark x. 9.

(c) Gal. iv. 26.

For we declare that we believe in God, because our mind depends upon him as true, and our confidence rests in him. But this would not be applicable to the Church, any more than to "the remission of sins," or the "resurrection of the body." Therefore, though I am averse to contentions about words, yet I would rather adopt a proper phraseology adapted to express the subject, than affect forms of expression by which the subject would be unnecessarily involved in obscurity. The design of this clause is to teach us, that though the devil moves every engine to destroy the grace of Christ, and all the enemies of God exert the most furious violence in the same attempt, yet his grace cannot possibly be extinguished, nor can his blood be rendered barren, so as not to produce some fruit. Here we must regard both the secret election of God, and his internal vocation; because he alone "knoweth them that are his?" and keeps them enclosed under his "seal," to use the expression of Paul; (a) except that they bear his impression, by which they may be distinguished from the reprobate. But because a small and contemptible number is concealed among a vast multitude, and a few grains of wheat are covered with a heap of chaff, we must leave to God alone the knowledge of his Church, whose foundation is his eternal election. Nor is it sufficient to include in our thoughts and minds the whole multitude of the elect, unless we conceive of such an unity of the Church, into which we know ourselves to be truly engrafted. For unless we are united with all the other members under Christ our head, we can have no hope of the future inheritance. Therefore the Church is called CATHOLIC, or universal; because there could not be two or three churches, without Christ being divided, which is impossible. But all the elect of God are so connected with each other in Christ, that as they depend upon one head, so they grow up together as into one body, compacted together like members of the same body; being made truly one, as living by one faith, hope, and charity, through the same Divine Spirit, being called not only to the same inheritance of eternal life, but also to a

(d) 2 Tim. ii. 19.

participation of one God and Christ. Therefore though the melancholy desolation which surrounds us, seems to proclaim that there is nothing left of the Church, let us remember that the death of Christ is fruitful, and that God wonderfully preserves his Church as it were in hiding places; according to what he said to Elijah: "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (e)

III. This article of the creed, however, relates in some measure to the external Church, that every one of us may maintain a brotherly agreement with all the children of God, may pay due deference to the authority of the Church, and in a word, may conduct himself as one of the flock. Therefore we add THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS; a clause, which though generally omitted by the ancients, ought not to be neglected, because it excellently expresses the character of the Church: as though it had been said that the saints are united in the fellowship of Christ on this condition, that whatever benefits God confers upon them, they should mutually communicate to each other. This destroys not the diversity of grace, for we know that the gifts of the Spirit are variously distributed; nor does it disturb the order of civil polity, which secures to every individual the exclusive enjoyment of his property, as it is necessary for the preservation of the peace of society that men should have peculiar and distinct possessions. But the community asserted is such as Luke describes, that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:" (f) and Paul when he exhorts the Ephesians to be "one body, and one Spirit, even as they were called in one hope." (g) Nor is it possible, if they are truly persuaded that God is a common Father to them all, and Christ their common Head, but that being united in brotherly affection, they should mutually communicate their advantages to each other. Now it highly concerns us to know what benefit we receive from this. For we believe the Church, in order to have a certain assurance

(e) Rom. xi. 4. 1 Kings xix. 18.

(f) Acts iv. 32.

(g) Ephes. iv. 4.



that we are members of it. For thus our salvation rests on firm and solid foundations, so that it cannot fall into ruin, though the whole fabric of the world should be dissolved. First, It is founded on the election of God, and can be liable to no variation or failure, but with the subversion of his eternal Providence. In the next place, it is united with the stability of Christ, who will no more suffer his faithful people to be severed from him, than his members to be torn in pieces. Besides, we are certain as long as we continue in the bosom of the Church, that we shall remain in possession of the truth. Lastly, we understand these promises to belong to us; "In mount Zion shall be deliverance." (*h*) "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." (*i*) Such is the effect of union with the Church, that it retains us in the fellowship of God. The very word *communion* likewise contains abundant consolation; for while it is certain that whatever the Lord confers upon his members and ours belong to us, our hope is confirmed by all the benefits which they enjoy. But in order to embrace the unity of the Church in this manner, it is unnecessary, as we have observed, to see the Church with our eyes, or feel it with our hands: on the contrary, from its being an object of faith, we are taught that it is no less to be considered as existing, when it escapes our observation, than if it were evident to our eyes. Nor is our faith the worse, because it acknowledges the Church which we do not fully comprehend; for we are not commanded here to distinguish the reprobate from the elect, which is not our province, but that of God alone; we are only required to be assured in our minds, that all those who by the mercy of God the Father, through the efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit, have attained to the participation of Christ, are separated as the peculiar possession and portion of God; and that being numbered among them, we are partakers of such great grace.

IV. But as our present design is to treat of the *visible* Church, we may learn even from the title of *mother*, how useful and even necessary it is for us to know her; since

(*h*) Joel ii. 32. Obad. 17.

(*i*) Psalm xlv. 5.

there is no other way of entrance into life, unless we are conceived by her, born of her, nourished at her breasts, and continually preserved under her care and government till we are divested of this mortal flesh and become like the angels.”(k) For our infirmity will not admit of our dismissal from her school; we must continue under her instruction and discipline to the end of our lives. It is also to be remarked, that out of her bosom there can be no hope of remission of sins, or any salvation, according to the testimony of Joel and Isaiah(l); which is confirmed by Ezekiel, (m) when he denounces that those whom God excludes from the heavenly life, shall not be enrolled among his people. So, on the contrary, those who devote themselves to the service of God, are said to inscribe their names among the citizens of Jerusalem. For which reason the Psalmist says, “Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation: that I may see the good of thy chosen: that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation; that I may glory with thine inheritance.”(n) In these words the paternal favour of God, and the peculiar testimony of the spiritual life, are restricted to his flock, to teach us that it is always fatally dangerous to be separated from the Church.

V. But let us proceed to state what belongs to this subject. Paul writes, that Christ, “that he might fill all things, gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”(o) We see that though God could easily make his people perfect in a single moment, yet it was not his will that they should grow to mature age, but under the education of the Church. We see the means expressed: the preaching of the heavenly doctrine is assigned to the pastors. We see that all are placed under the same

(k) Matt. xxii. 30.

(l) Isaiah xxxvii. 35. Joel. ii. 32.

(m) Ezek. xiii. 9.

(n) Psalm cvi. 4, 5.

(o) Ephes. iv. 10--13.

regulation, in order that they may submit themselves with gentleness and docility of mind to be governed by the pastors who are appointed for this purpose. Isaiah had long before described the kingdom of Christ by this character; "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever." (*p*) Hence it follows, that all who reject the spiritual food for their souls, which is extended to them by the hands of the Church, deserve to perish with hunger and want. It is God who inspires us with faith, but it is through the instrumentality of the Gospel, according to the declaration of Paul, "that faith cometh by hearing." (*q*) So also the power to save resides in God, but, as the same apostle testifies in another place, he displays it in preaching of the Gospel. With this design, in former ages he commanded solemn assemblies to be held in the sanctuary, that the doctrine taught by the mouth of the priest might maintain the unity of the faith; and the design of those magnificent titles, where the temple is called God's "rest," his "sanctuary," and "dwelling-place," where he is said to "dwell between the cherubim," (*r*) was no other than to promote the esteem, love, reverence, and dignity of the heavenly doctrine; which the view of a mortal and despised man would otherwise greatly diminish. That we may know therefore that we have an inestimable treasure communicated to us from earthen vessels, (*s*) God himself comes forward, and as he is the author of this arrangement, so he will be acknowledged as present in his institution. Therefore after having forbidden his people to devote themselves to auguries, divinations, magical arts, necromancy, and other superstitions, he adds, that he will give them what ought to be sufficient for every purpose, namely, that he will never leave them without prophets. Now as he did not refer his ancient people to angels, but raised up earthly teachers, who truly discharged the office of angels; so

(*p*) Isaiah lix, 21.(*q*) Rom. x. 17.(*r*) Psalm cxxxii. 14. lxxx. 1.(*s*) 2 Cor. iv. 7.



in the present day he is pleased to teach us by the instrumentality of men. And as formerly he was not content with the written law, but appointed the priests as interpreters, at whose lips the people might inquire its true meaning ; so in the present day, he not only requires us to be attentive to reading, but has appointed teachers for our assistance. This is attended with a two-fold advantage. For on the one hand, it is a good proof of our obedience when we listen to his ministers, just as if he were addressing us himself; and on the other, he has provided for our infirmity, by choosing to address us through the medium of human interpreters, that he may sweetly allure us to him, rather than to drive us away from him by his thunders. And the propriety of this familiar manner of teaching, is evident to all the pious, from the tenor with which the majesty of God justly alarms them. Those who consider the authority of the doctrine as weakened by the meanness of the men who are called to teach it, betray their ingratitude ; because among so many excellent gifts with which God hath adorned mankind, it is a peculiar privilege, that he deigns to consecrate men's lips and tongues to his service, that his voice may be heard in them. Let us not therefore, on our parts, be reluctant to receive and obey the doctrine of salvation proposed to us at his express command ; for though the power of God is not confined to external means, yet he has confined us to the ordinary manner of teaching, the fanatical rejectors of which necessarily involve themselves in many fatal snares. Many are urged by pride, or disdain, or envy, to persuade themselves that they can profit sufficiently by reading and meditating in private, and so to despise public assemblies, and consider preaching as unnecessary. But since they do all in their power to dissolve and break asunder the bond of unity, which ought to be preserved inviolable, not one of them escapes the just punishment of this impious breach, but they all involve themselves in pestilent errors, and pernicious reveries. Wherefore, in order that the pure simplicity of faith may flourish among us, let us not be reluctant to use this exercise of piety, which the Divine institution has shewn to be necessary, and which God so repeatedly commends to us.



There has never been found among the most extravagant of mortals, one insolent enough to say that we ought to shut our ears against God ; but the prophets and pious teachers in all ages, have had a difficult contest with the wicked, whose arrogance can never submit to be taught by the lips and ministry of men. Now this is no other than effacing the image of God, which is discovered to us in the doctrine.— For the faithful under the former dispensation were directed to seek the face of God in the sanctuary, (t) and this is so frequently repeated in the law, for no other reason, but because the doctrine of the law and the exhortations of the prophets exhibited to them a lively image of God ; as Paul declares that his preaching displayed “ the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (v) And in so much the greater detestation ought we to hold those apostates, who make it their study to cause divisions in churches, as if they would drive away sheep from the folds and throw them into the jaws of wolves. But let us remember what we have quoted from Paul ; that the Church can only be edified by the preaching of this word, and that the saints have no common bond of union to hold them together, any longer than while learning and profiting with one accord, they observe the order which God hath prescribed for the Church. It was principally for this end, as I have already stated, that the faithful under the law were commanded to resort to the sanctuary ; because Moses not only celebrates it as the residence of God, but likewise declares it to be the place where God hath fixed the record of his name : (w) which without the doctrine of piety, he plainly suggests would be of no use. And it is undoubtedly for the same reason that David complains, with great bitterness of soul, of being prevented from access to the tabernacle by the tyrannical cruelty of his enemies. (x) To many persons perhaps this appears to be a puerile lamentation, because it could be but a very trivial loss, and not a privation of much satisfaction to be absent from the court of the temple, provided he were in the possession of other plea-

(t) Psalm cv. 4.

(v) 2 Cor. iv. 6.

(w) Exod. xx. 24.

(x) Psalm lxxxiv.

tures. But by this one trouble, anxiety, and sorrow, he complains that he is grieved, tormented, and almost consumed; because nothing is more valued by the faithful than this assistance, by which God gradually raises his people from one degree of elevation to another. For it is also to be remarked, that God always manifested himself to the holy fathers, in the mirror of his doctrine, in such a manner that their knowledge of him might be spiritual. Hence the temple was not only called his *face*, but in order to guard against all superstition, was also designated as his *footstool*. (y) And this is that happy conjunction in the unity of the faith spoken of by Paul, when all, from the highest to the lowest, are aspiring towards the head. All the temples which the gentiles erected to God with any other design, were nothing but a profanation of his worship; a crime which, though not to an equal extent, was also frequently committed by the Jews. Stephen reproaches them for it in the language of Isaiah; “the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool,” (z) because God alone sanctifies temples by his word, that they may be legitimately used for his worship. And if we presumptuously attempt any thing without his command, the evil beginning is immediately succeeded by farther inventions, which multiply the mischief without end. Xerxes, however, acted with great indiscretion, when, at the advice of the magi, he burned or demolished all the temples of Greece, from an opinion of the absurdity that gods, to whom all space ought to be left perfectly free, should be enclosed within walls and roofs. As if it were not in the power of God, to descend in any way to us, and yet at the same time not to make any change of place or to confine us to earthly means, but rather to use them as vehicles to elevate us towards his celestial glory, which fills all things with its immensity, as well as transcends the heavens in its sublimity.

VI. Now as the present age has witnessed a violent dis-

(y) Psalm cxxxii. 7. xcix. 5.

(z) Acts vii. 48, 49.

pute respecting the efficacy of the ministry; some exaggerating its dignity beyond measure, and others contending that it is a criminal transfer to mortal man of what properly belongs to the Holy Spirit, to suppose that ministers and teachers penetrate the mind and heart, so as to correct the blindness of the one, and the hardness of the other; we must proceed to a decision of this controversy. The arguments advanced on both sides may be easily reconciled by a careful observation of the passages, in which God, the Author of preaching, connecting his Spirit with it, promises that it shall be followed with success; or those in which, separating himself from all external aids, he attributes the commencement of faith, as well as its subsequent progress, entirely and exclusively to himself. The office of the second Elias, according to Luke, was, to illuminate the minds and to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.” (a) Christ declares that he sent his disciples, that they “should bring forth fruit” (b) from their labours. What that fruit was, is briefly defined by Peter, when he says that we are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible.” (c) Therefore Paul glories that he had “begotten” the Corinthians “through the gospel,” and that they were “the seal of his apostleship;” (d) and even that he was “not a minister of the letter,” merely striking the ear with a vocal sound, but that the energy of the Spirit had been given to him to render his doctrine efficacious. (e) In the same sense, he affirms, in another epistle, that his “gospel came not in word only, but also in power.” (f) He declares also to the Galatians, that they “received the Spirit by the hearing of faith.” (g) In short, there are several places, in which he not only represents himself as a “labourer together with God,” (h) but even attributes to himself the office of communicating salvation. He certainly

(a) Luke i. 17.

(b) John xv. 16

(c) 1 Peter i. 23.

(d) 1 Cor. iv. 15. ix. 2.

(e) 2 Cor. iii. 6

(f) 1 Thess. i. 5.

(g) Gal. iii. 2.

(h) 1 Cor. iii. 9. xv. 10. 2 Cor. vi. 1.



never advanced all these things, in order to arrogate to himself the least praise independent of God, as he briefly states in other passages: "Our entrance in unto you was not in vain." (i) "I labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." (k) "He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles." (l) Besides, it is evident, from other places, that he leaves ministers possessed of nothing, considered in themselves: "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (m) Again: "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (n) And it is certainly necessary to bear in memory those passages, in which God ascribes to himself the illumination of the mind and renovation of the heart, and thereby declares it to be sacrilege for man to arrogate to himself any share in either. Yet every one who attends with docility of mind to the ministers whom God hath appointed, will learn from the beneficial effect, that this mode of teaching has not in vain been pleasing to God, and that this yoke of modesty has not without reason been imposed upon the faithful.

VII. From what has been said, I conceive it must now be evident what judgment we ought to form respecting the Church, which is visible to our eyes, and falls under our knowledge. For we have remarked that the word *Church* is used in the sacred scriptures in two senses. Sometimes when they mention the Church, they intend that which is really such in the sight of God, into which none are received but those who by adoption and grace are the children of God, and by the sanctification of the Spirit are the true members of Christ. And then it comprehends not only the saints at any one time resident on earth, but all the elect who have lived from the beginning of the world. But the word *Church* is frequently used in the scriptures to designate the whole multitude dispersed all over the

(i) 1 Thess. ii. 1.

(k) Col. i. 29.

(l) Gal. ii. 8.

(m) 1 Cor. iii. 7.

(n) 1 Cor. xv. 10.



world, who profess to worship one God and Jesus Christ, who are initiated into his faith by baptism, who testify their unity in true doctrine and charity by a participation of the sacred supper, who consent to the word of the Lord, and preserve the ministry which Christ has instituted for the purpose of preaching it. In this Church are included many hypocrites, who have nothing of Christ but the name and appearance; many persons ambitious, avaricious, envious, slanderous, and dissolute in their lives, who are tolerated for a time, either because they cannot be convicted by a legitimate process, or because discipline is not always maintained with sufficient vigour. As it is necessary therefore to believe that Church which is invisible to us, and known to God alone; so this Church which is visible to men, we are commanded to honour, and to maintain communion with it.

VIII. As far therefore as was important for us to know it, the Lord has described it by certain marks and characters. It is the peculiar prerogative of God himself to "know them that are his," (o) as we have already stated from Paul. And to guard against human presumption ever going to such an extreme, the experience of every day teaches us how very far his secret judgments transcend all our apprehensions. For those who seemed the most abandoned, and were generally considered past all hope, are recalled by his goodness into the right way; while some who seemed to stand better than others, fall into perdition. "According to the secret predestination of God," therefore, as Augustine observes, "there are many sheep without the pale of the Church, and many wolves within." For he knows and seals those who know not either him or themselves. Of those who externally bear his seal, his eyes alone can discern who are unfeignedly holy, and will persevere to the end; which is the completion of salvation. On the other hand, as he saw it to be in some measure requisite that we should know who ought to be considered as his children, he has in this respect accommodated him-

(o) 2 Tim. ii. 19.

self to our capacity. And as it was not necessary that on this point we should have an assurance of faith, he has substituted in its place a judgment of charity, according to which we ought to acknowledge as members of the Church all those who by a confession of faith, an exemplary life, and a participation of the sacraments, profess the same God and Christ with ourselves. But the knowledge of the body itself being more necessary to our salvation, he has distinguished it by more clear and certain characters.

IX. Hence the visible Church rises conspicuous to our view. For wherever we find the word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ; there, it is not to be doubted, is a Church of God: for his promise can never deceive; "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (p). But that we may have a clear understanding of the whole of this subject, let us proceed by the following steps: That the universal Church is the whole multitude, collected from all nations, who though dispersed in countries widely distant from each other, nevertheless consent to the same truth of Divine doctrine, and are united by the bond of the same religion.—That in this universal Church are comprehended particular churches, distributed according to human necessity in various towns and villages; and that each of these respectively is justly distinguished by the name and authority of a church: and that individuals, who on a profession of piety are enrolled among churches of the same description, though they are really strangers to any particular church, do nevertheless in some respect belong to it, till they are expelled from it by a public decision. There is some difference however in the mode of judging respecting private persons and churches. For it may happen, in the case of persons whom we think altogether unworthy of the society of the pious, that on account of the common consent of the Church, by which they are tolerated in the body of Christ, we may be obliged to treat them as brethren,

and to class them in the number of the faithful. In our private opinion we approve not of such persons as members of the Church, but we leave them the station they hold among the people of God, till it be taken away from them by legitimate authority. But respecting the congregation itself, we must form a different judgment. If they possess and honour the ministry of the word, and the administration of the sacraments, they are, without all doubt, entitled to be considered as a Church; because it is certain that the word and sacraments cannot be unattended with some good effects. In this manner we preserve the unity of the universal Church, which diabolical spirits have always been endeavouring to destroy; and at the same time without interfering with the authority of those legitimate assemblies, which local convenience has distributed in different places.

X. We have stated that the marks by which the Church is to be distinguished, are, the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments. For these can nowhere exist without bringing forth fruit, and being prospered with the blessing of God. I assert not that wherever the word is preached, the good effects of it immediately appear; but that it is never received so as to obtain a permanent establishment, except in order that it may be efficacious. However this may be, where the word is heard with reverence, and the sacraments are not neglected, there we discover, while that is the case, an appearance of the Church, which is liable to no suspicion or uncertainty, of which no one can safely despise the authority, or reject the admonitions, or resist the counsels, or slight the censures, much less separate from it and break up its unity. For so highly does the Lord esteem the communion of his Church, that he considers every one as a traitor and apostate from religion, who perversely withdraws himself from any christian society which preserves the true ministry of the word and sacraments. He commends the authority of the Church, in such a manner as to account every violation of it an infringement of his own. For it is not a trivial circumstance, that the Church is called "the house of God, the pillar and ground of



truth." (q) For in these words Paul signifies that in order to keep the truth of God from being lost in the world, the Church is its faithful guardian; because it has been the will of God, by the ministry of the Church, to preserve the pure preaching of his word, and to manifest himself as our affectionate Father, while he nourishes us with spiritual food, and provides all things conducive to our salvation. Nor is it small praise, that the Church is chosen and separated by Christ to be his spouse, "not having spot or wrinkle," (r) to be "his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (s) Hence it follows, that a departure from the Church is a renunciation of God and Christ. And such a criminal dissension is so much the more to be avoided; because while we endeavour, as far as lies in our power, to destroy the truth of God, we deserve to be crushed with the most powerful thunders of his wrath. Nor is it possible to imagine a more atrocious crime, than that sacrilegious perfidy, which violates the conjugal relation that the only begotten Son of God has condescended to form with us.

XI. Let us therefore diligently retain those characters impressed upon our minds, and estimate them according to the judgment of God. For there is nothing that Satan labours more to accomplish, than to remove and destroy one or both of them; at one time to efface and obliterate these marks, and so to take away all true and genuine distinction of the Church; at another to inspire us with contempt of them, and so to drive us out of the Church by an open separation. By his subtlety it has happened, that in some ages the pure preaching of the word has altogether disappeared; and in the present day he is labouring with the same malignity to overturn the ministry; which however Christ has ordained in his Church, so that if it were taken away, the edification of the Church would be quite at an end. How dangerous then, how fatal is the temptation, when it even enters into the heart of a man to withdraw himself from that congregation, in which he discovers those signs and characters which the Lord has deemed sufficiently descriptive of his Church!

(q) 1 Tim. iii. 15.

(r) Eph. v. 27.

(s) Eph. i. 23.



We see, however, that great caution requires to be observed on both sides. For, to prevent imposture from deceiving us, under the name of the Church, every congregation assuming this name should be brought to that proof, like gold to the touchstone. If it have the order prescribed by the Lord in the word and sacraments, it will not deceive us; we may securely render to it the honour due to all churches. On the contrary, if it pretend to the name of a Church, without the word and sacraments, we ought to beware of such delusive pretensions, with as much caution as, in the other case, we should use in avoiding presumption and pride.

XII. When we affirm the pure ministry of the word, and pure order in the celebration of the sacraments, to be a sufficient pledge and earnest, that we may safely embrace the society in which both these are found, as a true Church, we carry the observation to this point, that such a society should never be rejected as long as it continues in those things, although in other respects it may be chargeable with many faults. It is possible, moreover, that some fault may insinuate itself into the preaching of the doctrine, or the administration of the sacraments, which ought not to alienate us from its communion. For all the articles of true doctrine are not of the same description. Some are so necessary to be known, that they ought to be universally received as fixed and indubitable principles, as the peculiar maxims of religion; such as that there is one God; that Christ is God and the Son of God; that our salvation depends on the mercy of God; and the like. There are others, which are controverted among the churches, yet without destroying the unity of the faith. For if there be a difference among the churches on this point; and one church be of opinion, that souls, at their departure from their bodies, are immediately removed to heaven; and another church venture to determine nothing respecting their local situation, but be nevertheless firmly convinced, that they live to the Lord; and if this diversity of sentiment on both sides be free from all fondness for contention and obstinacy of assertion; the language of the apostle is, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded,

God shall reveal even this unto you.” (t) Does not this sufficiently shew, that a diversity of opinion respecting these non-essential points ought not to be a cause of discord among Christians. It is of importance, indeed, that we should agree in every thing; but as there is no person who is not enveloped with some cloud of ignorance, either we must allow of no church at all, or we must forgive mistakes in those things, of which persons may be ignorant, without violating the essence of religion, or incurring the loss of salvation. Here I would not be understood to plead for any errors, even the smallest, or to recommend their being encouraged by connivance or flattery. But I maintain, that we ought not, on account of every trivial difference of sentiment, to abandon the Church, which retains the saving and pure doctrine that ensures the preservation of piety, and supports the use of the sacraments instituted by our Lord. In the mean time, if we endeavour to correct what we disapprove, we are acting in this case according to our duty. And to this we are encouraged by the direction of Paul: “If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.” (v) From which it appears, that every member of the Church is required to exert himself for the general edification, according to the measure of his grace, provided he do it decently and in order; that is to say, that we should neither forsake the communion of the Church, nor by continuing in it, disturb its peace and well regulated discipline.

XIII. But in bearing with imperfections of life, we ought to carry our indulgence a great deal further. For this is a point in which we are very liable to err, and here Satan lies in wait to deceive us with no common devices. For there have always been persons, who, from a false notion of perfect sanctity, as if they were already become disembodied spirits, despised the society of all men in whom they could discover any remains of human infirmity. Such in ancient times were the Cathari, and also the Donatists, who approached to the same folly. Such in the present day are some of the Anabaptists, who would be thought to have made advances in

(t) Phil. iii. 15.

(v) 1 Cor. xiv. 30.

piety beyond all others. There are others who err, more from an inconsiderate zeal for righteousness, than from this unreasonable pride. For when they perceive, that among those to whom the gospel is preached, its doctrine is not followed by correspondent effects in the life, they immediately pronounce, that there no church exists. This is, indeed, a very just ground of offence, and one for which we furnish more than sufficient occasion in the present unhappy age: nor is it possible to excuse our abominable inactivity, which the Lord will not suffer to escape with impunity, and which he has already begun to chastise with heavy scourges. Woe to us therefore, who, by the dissolute licentiousness of our crimes, cause weak consciences to be wounded on our account! But, on the other hand, the error of the persons of whom we now speak, consists in not knowing how to fix any limits to their offence. For where our Lord requires the exercise of mercy, they entirely neglect it, and indulge themselves in immoderate severity. Supposing it impossible for the Church to exist, where there is not a perfect purity and integrity of life, through a hatred of crimes they depart from the true Church, while they imagine themselves to be only withdrawing from the factions of the wicked. They allege, that the Church of Christ is holy. But that they may also understand, that it is composed of good and bad men mingled together, let them hear that parable from the lips of Christ, where it is compared to a net, in which fishes of all kinds are collected, and no separation is made till they are exhibited on the shore.<sup>(w)</sup> Let them hear another parable, comparing the Church to a field, which, after having been sown with good seed, is, by the craft of an enemy, corrupted with tares, from which it is never cleared till the harvest is brought into the barn.<sup>(x)</sup> Lastly, let them hear another comparison of the Church to a threshing-floor, in which the wheat is collected in such a manner, that it lies concealed under the chaff, till, after being carefully purged, by winnowing and sifting, it is at length laid up in the garner.<sup>(y)</sup> But if our Lord declares, that the Church is to labour under

<sup>(w)</sup> Matt. xiii. 47.<sup>(x)</sup> Matt. xiii. 24.<sup>(y)</sup> Matt. iii. 12.



this evil, and to be encumbered with a mixture of wicked men, even till the day of judgment, it is vain to seek for a church free from every spot.

XIV. But they exclaim, that it is an intolerable thing that the pestilence of crimes so generally prevails. I grant it would be happy if the fact were otherwise; but in reply, I would present them with the judgment of the apostle. Among the Corinthians, more than a few had gone astray, and the infection had seized almost the whole society; there was not only one species of sin, but many; and they were not trivial faults, but dreadful crimes; and there was not only a corruption of morals, but also of doctrine. In this case, what is the conduct of the holy apostle, the organ of the heavenly Spirit, by whose testimony the Church stands or falls? Does he seek to separate from them? Does he reject them from the kingdom of Christ? Does he strike them with the thunderbolt of the severest anathema? He not only does neither of these things; but, on the contrary, acknowledges and speaks of them as a Church of Christ and a society of saints. If there remained a church among the Corinthians, where contentions, factions, and emulations were raging; where cupidity, disputes, and litigations were prevailing; where a crime held in execration even among the Gentiles, was publicly sanctioned; where the name of Paul, whom they ought to have revered as their father, was insolently defamed; where some ridiculed the doctrine of the resurrection, with the subversion of which the whole Gospel would be annihilated; where the graces of God were made subservient to ambition, instead of charity; where many things were conducted without decency and order (z); and if there still remained a Church, because the ministry of the word and sacraments was not rejected, who can refuse the name of a Church to those who cannot be charged with a tenth part of those crimes? And those who display such violence and severity against the churches of the present age, I ask how would they have conducted themselves towards

(z) 1 Cor. i. 11. iii. 3. v. 1. vi. 7. ix. 1. xiv. 26, 40. xv. 12.

the Galatians who almost entirely deserted the gospel, but among whom nevertheless the same apostle found churches? (a)

XV. They object that Paul bitterly reproves the Corinthians, for admitting an atrocious offender into their company, and follows this reproof with a general declaration that with a man of scandalous life it is not lawful even to eat. (b) Here they exclaim, If it be not lawful to eat common bread with him, how can it be lawful to unite with him in eating the bread of the Lord? I confess, it is a great disgrace, if persons of immoral lives occupy places among the children of God; and if the sacred body of Christ be prostituted to them, the disgrace is vastly increased. And indeed, if churches be well regulated, they will not suffer persons of abandoned characters among them, nor will they promiscuously admit the worthy and the unworthy to that sacred supper. But because the pastors are not always so diligent in watching over them, and sometimes exercise more indulgence than they ought, or are prevented from exerting the severity they would wish, it happens that even those who are openly wicked are not always expelled from the society of the saints. This I acknowledge to be a fault, nor have I any inclination to extenuate it, since Paul sharply reproves it in the Corinthians. But though the Church may be deficient in its duty, it does not therefore follow that it is the place of every individual to pass judgment of separation for himself. I admit that it is the duty of a pious man to withdraw himself from all private intimacy with the wicked, and not to involve himself in any voluntary connection with them; but it is one thing, to avoid familiar intercourse with the wicked; and another thing, from hatred of them, to renounce the communion of the Church. And persons who deem it sacrilege to participate with them the bread of the Lord, are in this respect far more rigid than Paul. For when he exhorts us to a pure

(a) Gal. i. 6. iii. 1. iv. 11. (b) 1 Cor. v. 2, 11, 12.

and holy participation of it, he requires not one to examine another, or every one to examine the whole church, but each individual to prove himself. If it were unlawful to communicate with an unworthy person, Paul would certainly have enjoined us to look around us, to see whether there were not some one in the multitude by whose impurity we might be contaminated. But as he only requires every one to examine himself, he shews that it is not the least injury to us if some unworthy persons intrude themselves with us. And this is fully implied in what he afterwards subjoins; "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself." (c) He says not to others, but to himself, and with sufficient reason. For it ought not to be left to the judgment of every individual, *who* ought to be admitted into the Church, and *who* ought to be expelled from it. This authority belongs to the whole Church, and cannot be exercised without legitimate order, as will be stated more at large hereafter. It would be unjust therefore that any individual should be contaminated with the unworthiness of another, whose approach it is neither in his power nor his duty to prevent.

XVI. But though this temptation sometimes arises even to good men, from an inconsiderate zeal for righteousness, yet we shall generally find that excessive severity is more owing to pride and haughtiness, and a false opinion which persons entertain of their own superior sanctity, than to true holiness, and a real concern for its interests. Those therefore who are most daring in promoting a separation from the church, and act as it were as standard bearers in the revolt, have in general no other motive than to make an ostentatious display of their own superior excellence, and their contempt of all others. Augustine correctly and judiciously observes; "Whereas the pious rule and method of ecclesiastical discipline ought principally to regard the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, which the apostle enjoined to be preserved by mutual forbearance, and which not being pre-



served, the medicinal punishment is evinced to be not only superfluous, but even pernicious, and therefore to be no longer medicinal: those wicked children, who, not from a hatred of the iniquities of others, but from a fondness for their own contentions, earnestly endeavour to draw the simple and uninformed multitude wholly after them, by entangling them with boasting of their own characters, or at least to divide them: those persons, I say, inflated with pride, infuriated with obstinacy, insidious in the circulation of calumnies, and turbulent in raising seditions, conceal themselves under the mask of a rigid severity, lest they should be proved to be destitute of the truth; and those things which in the Holy Scriptures are commanded to be done with great moderation, and without violating the sincerity of love, or breaking the unity of peace, for the correction of the faults of our brethren, they pervert to the sacrilege of schism, and an occasion of separation from the Church." To pious and peaceable persons, he gives this advice: that they should correct in many whatever they can; that what they cannot, they should patiently bear, and affectionately lament; till God either reform and correct it, or at the harvest, root up the tares, and sift out the chaff. All pious persons should study to fortify themselves with these counsels, lest, while they consider themselves as valiant and strenuous defenders of righteousness, they depart from the kingdom of heaven, which is the only kingdom of righteousness. For since it is the will of God that the communion of his Church should be maintained in this external society, those who, from an aversion to wicked men, destroy the token of that society, enter on a course in which they are in great danger of falling from the communion of saints. Let them consider, in the first place, that in a great multitude there are many who escape their observation, who nevertheless are truly holy and innocent in the sight of God. Secondly, let them consider, that of those who appear subject to moral maladies, there are many who by no means please or flatter themselves in their vices, but are oftentimes aroused with a serious fear of God, to aspire to greater integrity. Thirdly, let them consider that judgment ought not to be

pronounced upon a man from a single act, since the holiest persons have sometimes most grievous falls. Fourthly, let them consider, that the ministry of the word, and the participation of the sacraments, ought to have too much influence in preserving the unity of the Church, to admit of its being destroyed by the guilt of a few impious men. Lastly, let them consider that in forming an estimate of the Church, the judgment of God is of more weight than that of man.

XVII. When they allege that there must be some reason why the Church is said to be holy, it is necessary to examine the holiness in which it excels; but by refusing to admit the existence of a church without absolute and sinless perfection, we should leave no church in the world. It is true that, as Paul tells us, "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, by the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (d) It is nevertheless equally true, that the Lord worketh from day to day in smoothing its wrinkles and purging away its spots: whence it follows, that its holiness is not yet perfect. The Church therefore is so far holy, that it is daily improving, but has not yet arrived at perfection; that it is daily advancing, but has not yet reached the mark of holiness: as in another part of this work will be more fully explained. The predictions of the prophets, therefore, that "Jerusalem shall be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more," and that the way of God shall be a "way of holiness," over which "the unclean shall not pass;" (e) are not to be understood as if there were no blemish remaining in any of the members of the Church; but because they aspire with all their souls towards perfect holiness and purity, the goodness of God attributes to them that sanctity to which they have not yet fully attained. And though such evidences of sanctification are oftentimes rarely to be found among men, yet it must be maintained, that from the foundation of the world, there has never been a period in which God had not his Church in it; and that to the consummation of all things,

(d) Ephes. v. 25—27.

(e) Joel iii. 17. Isaiah xxxv. 8.

there never will be a time in which he will not have his Church. For although, in the very beginning of time, the whole human race was corrupted and defiled by the sin of Adam; yet from this polluted mass, God always sanctifies some vessels to honour, so that there is no age which has not experienced his mercy. This he has testified by certain promises, such as the following: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." (*f*) Again, "The Lord hath chosen Zion: he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever." (*g*) Again, "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night; If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." (*h*)

XVIII. Of this truth Christ himself, the apostles, and almost all the prophets, have given us an example. Dreadful are those descriptions in which Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Habakkuk, and others, deplore the disorders of the church of Jerusalem. There was such general and extreme corruption in the people, in the magistrates, and in the priests, that Isaiah does not hesitate to compare Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah. Religion was partly despised, partly corrupted. Their manners were generally disgraced by thefts, robberies, treacheries, murders, and similar crimes. Nevertheless, the prophets on this account neither raised themselves new churches, nor built new altars for the oblation of separate sacrifices; but whatever were the characters of the people, yet because they considered that God had deposited his word among that nation, and instituted the ceremonies in which he was there worshipped, they lifted up pure hands to him even in the congregation of the impious. If they had thought that they contracted any contagion from these services, surely they would have suffered a hundred deaths rather than have permitted themselves to be dragged to them. There was nothing therefore to prevent their depar-

(*f*) Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4. (*g*) Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14. (*h*) Jer. xxxi. 35, 36:



ture from them, but the desire of preserving the unity of the Church. But if the holy prophets were restrained by a sense of duty from forsaking the Church on account of the numerous and enormous crimes which were practised, not by a few individuals, but almost by the whole nation; it is extreme arrogance in us, if we presume immediately to withdraw from the communion of a Church, where the conduct of all the members is not compatible either with our judgment, or even with the Christian profession.

XIX. Now what kind of an age was that of Christ and his apostles? Yet the desperate impiety of the pharisees, and the dissolute lives every where led by the people, could not prevent *them* from using the same sacrifices, and assembling in the same temple with others for the public exercises of religion. How did this happen, but from a knowledge that the society of the wicked could not contaminate those who with pure consciences united with them in the same solemnities? If any one pay no deference to the prophets and apostles, let him at least acquiesce in the authority of Christ. Cyprian has excellently remarked; "Although tares, or impure vessels, are found in the Church, yet this is not a reason why we should withdraw from it. It only behoves us to labour that we may be the wheat, and to use our utmost endeavours and exertions, that we may be vessels of gold or of silver. But to break in pieces the vessels of earth, belongs to the Lord alone, to whom a rod of iron is also given. Nor let any one arrogate to himself, what is exclusively the province of the Son of God, by pretending to fan the floor, clear away the chaff, and separate all the tares by the judgment of man. This is proud obstinacy, and sacrilegious presumption, originating in a corrupt frenzy." Let these two points then be considered as decided; first, that he who voluntarily deserts the external communion of the Church, where the word of God is preached, and the sacraments are administered, is without any excuse; secondly, that the faults either of few persons or of many, form no obstacles to a due profession of our faith in the use of the ceremonies instituted by God; because the pious conscience is not wounded by the unworthiness of any other individual, whether he

be a pastor, or a private person, nor are the mysteries less pure and salutary to a holy and upright man, because they are received at the same time by the impure.

XX. Their severity and haughtiness go to still greater lengths. Acknowledging no church but such as is pure from the smallest blemishes, they are even angry with teachers, because, by exhorting the faithful to progressive improvements, they teach them to groan under the burden of sins, and to seek for pardon all their lifetime. For hereby, they pretend, the people are drawn away from perfection. I confess, that in urging men to perfection, we ought to labour with unremitting ardour and diligence ; but to inspire their minds with a persuasion that they have already attained it, while they are yet in the pursuit of it, I maintain to be a diabolical invention. Therefore, in the Creed, *the communion of saints* is immediately followed by *the forgiveness of sins*, which can only be obtained by the citizens and members of the Church, as we read in the prophet. (*i*) The heavenly Jerusalem therefore ought first to be built, in which this favour of God may be enjoyed, that whoever shall enter it, their iniquity shall be blotted out. Now, I affirm, that this ought first to be built ; not that there can ever be any church without remission of sins, but because God hath not promised to impart his mercy, except in the communion of saints. Our first entrance therefore into the Church and kingdom of God, is the remission of sins, without which we have no covenant or union with God. For thus he speaks by the prophet : “ In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground ; and I will break the bow and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever ; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies.” (*k*) We see how God reconciles us to him by his mercy. So in another place, where he foretels the restoration of the people whom he had scattered in his wrath, he says ; “ I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sin-

(*i*) Isaiah xxxiii. 24.

(*k*) Hos. ii. 18, 19.

ned against me.” (*l*) Wherefore it is by the sign of ablution, that we are initiated into the society of his Church; by which we are taught that there is no admittance for us into the family of God, unless our pollution be first taken away by his goodness.

XXI. Nor does God only once receive and adopt us into his Church by the remission of sins; he likewise preserves and keeps us in it by the same mercy. For to what purpose would it be, if we obtained a pardon which would afterwards be of no use? And that the mercy of the Lord would be vain and delusive, if it were only granted for once, all pious persons can testify to themselves; for every one of them is all his lifetime conscious of many infirmities, which need the Divine mercy. And surely it is not without reason, that God particularly promises this grace to the members of his family, and commands the same message of reconciliation to be daily addressed to them. As we carry about with us the reliques of sin therefore as long as we live, we shall scarcely continue in the Church for a single moment, unless we are sustained by the constant grace of the Lord in forgiving our sins. But the Lord hath called his people to eternal salvation: they ought therefore to believe that his grace is always ready to pardon their sins. Wherefore it ought to be held as a certain conclusion, that from the Divine liberality, by the intervention of the merit of Christ, through the sanctification of the Spirit, pardon of sins has been, and is daily bestowed upon us who have been admitted and engrafted into the body of the Church.

XXII. It was to dispense this blessing to us, that the keys were given to the Church. (*m*) For when Christ gave commandment to his apostles, and conferred on them the power of remitting sins, (*n*) it was not with an intention that they should merely absolve from their sins those who were converted from impiety to the Christian faith, but rather that they should continually exercise this office among the faithful. This is taught by Paul, when he says, that the message of reconciliation was committed to the ministers of the Church, that in the name of Christ they might daily exhort the people

(*l*) Jerem. xxxiii. 8. (*m*) Matt. xvi. 19. xviii. 18. (*n*) John xx. 23.



to be reconciled to God. (o) In the communion of saints, therefore, sins are continually remitted to us by the ministry of the Church, when the presbyters or bishops, to whom this office is committed, confirm pious consciences, by the promises of the gospel, in the hope of pardon and remission; and that as well publicly as privately, according as necessity requires. For there are many persons who, on account of their infirmity, stand in need of separate and private consolation. And Paul tells us, that he "taught" not only publicly, but also "from house to house, testifying repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" (p) and admonished every individual separately respecting the doctrine of salvation. Here are three things therefore worthy of our observation. First, that whatever holiness may distinguish the children of God, yet such is their condition as long as they inhabit a mortal body, that they cannot stand before God without remission of sins. Secondly, that this benefit belongs to the Church, so that we cannot enjoy it unless we continue in its communion. Thirdly, that it is dispensed to us by the ministers and pastors of the Church, either in the preaching of the gospel, or in the administration of the sacraments; and that this is the principal exercise of the power of the keys, which the Lord has conferred on the society of the faithful. Let every one of us therefore consider it as his duty, not to seek remission of sins any where but where the Lord has placed it. Of public reconciliation, which is a branch of discipline, we shall speak in its proper place.

XXIII. But as those fanatic spirits, of whom I speak, endeavour to rob the Church of this sole anchor of salvation, our consciences ought to be still more strongly fortified against such a pestilent opinion. The Novatians disturbed the ancient Churches with this tenet, but the present age also has witnessed some of the Anabaptists who resemble the Novatians by falling into the same follies. For they imagine that by baptism the people of God are regenerated to a pure and angelic life, which can-

(o) 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

(p) Acts xx. 20, 21.

not be contaminated by any impurities of the flesh. And if any one be guilty of sin after baptism, they leave him no prospect of escaping the inexorable judgment of God. In short, they encourage no hope of pardon, in any one who sins after having received the grace of God; because they acknowledge no other remission of sins, than that by which we are first regenerated. Now though there is no falsehood more clearly refuted in the Scripture than this, yet because its advocates find persons to submit to their impositions, as Novatus formerly had numerous followers, let us briefly shew how very pernicious their error is both to themselves and to others. In the first place, when the saints obey the command of the Lord by a daily repetition of this prayer, "forgive us our debts," (q) they certainly confess themselves to be sinners. Nor do they pray for it in vain, for our Lord has not enjoined the use of any petitions, but such as he designed to grant. And after he had declared that the whole prayer would be heard by the Father, he confirmed this absolution by a special promise. What do we want more? The Lord requires from the saints a confession of sins, and that daily as long as they live, and he promises them pardon. What presumption is it, either to assert that they are exempt from sin, or if they have fallen, to exclude them from all grace! To whom does he enjoin us to grant forgiveness seventy times seven times? Is it not to our brethren? And what was the design of this injunction, but that we might imitate his clemency? He pardons therefore, not once or twice, but as often as the sinner is alarmed with a sense of his sins, and sighs for mercy.

XXIV. But to begin from the infancy of the Church: the patriarchs had been circumcised, admitted to the privileges of the covenant, and without doubt instructed in justice and integrity by the care of their father, when they conspired to murder their brother. This was a crime to be abominated even by the most desperate and abandoned robbers. At length, softened by the admonitions of Judah,

they sold him for a slave. This also was an intolerable cruelty. Simon and Levi, in a spirit of nefarious revenge, condemned even by the judgment of their father, murdered the inhabitants of Sichein. Reuben was guilty of execrable incest with his father's concubine. Judah, with an intention of indulging a libidinous passion, violated the law of nature by a criminal connection with his son's wife. Yet they are so far from being expunged out of the number of the chosen people, that, on the contrary, they are constituted the heads of the nation. (r) What shall we say of David? Though he was the official guardian of justice, how scandalously did he prepare the way for the gratification of a blind passion, by the effusion of innocent blood! He had already been regenerated, and among the regenerate had been distinguished by the peculiar commendations of the Lord; yet he perpetrated a crime, even among heathens regarded with horror, and yet he obtained mercy. (s) And not to dwell any longer on particular examples, the numerous promises which the law and the prophets contain, of Divine mercy towards the Israelites, are so many proofs of the manifestation of God's placability to the offences of his people. For what does Moses promise to the people in case of their return to the Lord, after having fallen into idolatry? "Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee." (t)

XXV. But I am unwilling to commence an enumeration which would have no end. For the prophets are full of such promises, which offer mercy to the people, though covered with innumerable crimes. What sin is worse than rebellion? It is described as a divorce between God and the Church; yet this is overcome by the goodness of God. Hear his language by the mouth of Jeremiah. "If a man

(r) Gen. xxxvii. 18, 28. xxxiv. 25. xxxv. 22. xxxviii. 16.

(s) 2 Sam. xi. 4, 15. xii. 13.

(t) Deut. xxx. 3, 4.



put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that land be greatly polluted? But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Yet return again to me, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep anger for ever." (v) And surely there cannot possibly be any other disposition in him who affirms, that he "hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." (w) Therefore when Solomon dedicated the temple, he appointed it also for this purpose, that prayers, offered to obtain pardon of sins, might there be heard and answered. His words are, "If they sin against thee (for there is no man that sinneth not) and thou be angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; yet if they shall bethink themselves, and repent in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent and make supplication unto thee in the land of those that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and pray unto thee toward the land which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee." (x) Nor was it without cause, that in the law the Lord ordained daily sacrifices for sins; for unless he had foreseen that his people would be subject to the maladies of daily sins, he would never have appointed these remedies. (y)

XXVI. Now I ask whether by the advent of Christ, in whom the fulness of grace was displayed, the faithful have been deprived of this benefit, so that they can no

(v) Jer. iii. 1, 2, 12.

(x) 1 Kings viii. 46—50.

(w) Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

(y) Numb. xxviii. 3.

longer presume to supplicate for the pardon of their sins? so that if they offend against the Lord, they can obtain no mercy? What would this be but to affirm, that Christ came for the destruction of his people, and not for their salvation; if the loving-kindness of God in the pardon of sins, which was continually ready to be exercised to the saints under the Old Testament, be maintained to be now entirely withdrawn? But if we give any credit to the Scriptures, which proclaim, that in Christ the grace and philanthropy of God have at length been fully manifested, that his mercy has been abundantly diffused, and reconciliation between God and man accomplished; (z) we ought not to doubt that the clemency of our heavenly Father is displayed to us in greater abundance, rather than restricted or diminished. Examples to prove this are not wanting. Peter, who had been warned that he who would not confess the name of Christ before men would be denied by him before angels, denied him three times in one night, and accompanied the denial with execrations; yet he was not refused pardon. (a) Those of the Thessalonians who led disorderly lives, are reprehended by the Apostle, in order to be invited to repentance. (b) Nor does Peter drive Simon himself to despair, but rather directs him to cherish a favourable hope, when he persuades him to pray for forgiveness. (c)

XXVII. What are we to say of cases in which the most enormous sins have sometimes seized whole Churches? From this situation Paul rather mercifully reclaimed them, than abandoned them to the curse. The defection of the Galatians was no trivial offence. (d) The Corinthians were still less excusable, their crimes being more numerous and equally enormous. (e) Yet neither are excluded from the mercy of the Lord: on the contrary, the very persons who had gone beyond all others in impurity, unchastity, and fornication, are expressly invited to repentance.

(z) 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. Tit. ii. 11. iii. 4—7.

(a) Matt. x. 33. Mark viii. 38. Matt. xxvi. 69, &c. (b) 2 Thess. iii. 6, 11, 12.

(c) Acts viii. 22. (d) Gal. i. 6. iii. 1. iv. 9.

(e) 1 Cor. i. 11, 12. v. 1. 2 Cor. xii. 21.

For the covenant of the Lord will ever remain eternal and inviolable which he hath made with Christ, the antitype of Solomon, and with all his members, in these words; "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him." (f) Finally, the order of the Creed teaches us that pardon of sins ever continues in the Church of Christ, because after having mentioned the Church, it immediately adds *the forgiveness of sins*.

XXVIII. Some persons who are a little more judicious, perceiving the notion of Novatus to be so explicitly contradicted by the Scripture, do not represent every sin as unpardonable, but only voluntary transgression, into which a person may have fallen with the full exercise of his knowledge and will. These persons admit of no pardon for any sins, but such as may have been the mere errors of ignorance. But as the Lord, in the law, commanded some sacrifices to be offered to expiate the voluntary sins of the faithful, and others to atone for sins of ignorance; what extreme presumption is it to deny that there is any pardon for voluntary transgression! I maintain, that there is nothing more evident, than that the one sacrifice of Christ is available for the remission of the voluntary sins of the saints, since the Lord hath testified the same by the legal victims, as by so many types. Besides, who can plead ignorance as an excuse for David, who was evidently so well acquainted with the law? Did not David know that adultery and murder were great crimes, which he daily punished in others? Did the patriarchs consider fratricide as lawful? Had the Corinthians learned so little that they could imagine impurity, incontinence, fornication, animosities, and contentions, to be pleasing to God? Could Peter, who had been so carefully warned, be ignorant how great a crime it was to abjure his Master? Let us not therefore, by our

(f) Psalm lxxxix. 50—53.



cruelty, shut the gate of mercy which God has so liberally opened.

XXIX. I am fully aware that the old writers have explained those sins, which are daily forgiven to the faithful, to be the smaller faults, which are inadvertently committed through the infirmity of the flesh; but solemn repentance, which was then required for greater offences, they thought, was no more to be repeated than baptism. This sentiment is not to be understood as indicating their design, either to drive into despair such persons as had relapsed after their first repentance, or to extenuate those errors as if they were small in the sight of God. For they knew that the saints frequently stagger through unbelief, that they sometimes utter unnecessary oaths, that they occasionally swell into anger, and even break out into open reproaches, and that they are likewise chargeable with other faults which the Lord holds in the greatest abomination. They expressed themselves in this manner, to distinguish between private offences and those public crimes which were attended with great scandal in the Church. But the difficulty, which they made, of forgiving those who had committed any thing deserving of ecclesiastical censure, did not arise from an opinion that it was difficult for them to obtain pardon from the Lord; they only intended by this severity to deter others from rashly running into crimes, which would justly be followed by their exclusion from the communion of the Church. The word of the Lord, however, which ought to be our only rule in this case, certainly prescribes greater moderation. For it teaches, that the rigour of discipline ought not to be carried to such an extent, as to overwhelm with sorrow the person whose benefit we are required to regard as its principal object; as we have before shewn more at large.

## CHAPTER II.

*The True and False Church compared.*

**W**E have already stated the importance which we ought to attach to the ministry of the word and sacraments, and the extent to which our reverence for it ought to be carried, so as to account it a perpetual mark and characteristic of the Church. That is to say, that wherever *that* exists entire and uncorrupted, no errors and irregularities of conduct form a sufficient reason for refusing the name of a Church. In the next place, that the ministry itself is not so far vitiated by smaller errors, as to be considered on that account less legitimate. It has farther been shewn, that the errors which are entitled to this forgiveness are those, by which the grand doctrine of religion is not injured, which do not suppress the points in which all the faithful ought to agree as articles of faith, and which, in regard to the sacraments, neither abolish nor subvert the legitimate institution of their Author. But as soon as falsehood has made a breach in the fundamentals of religion, and the system of necessary doctrine is subverted, and the use of the sacraments, fails, the certain consequence is the ruin of the Church, as there is an end of a man's life when his throat is cut, or his heart is mortally wounded. And this is evident from the language of Paul, when he declares the Church to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." (*h*) If the foundation of the Church be the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, which enjoins the faithful to place their salvation in Christ alone, how can the edifice stand any longer, when that doctrine is taken away? The Church therefore must of necessity fall, where that system of religion is subverted, which alone is able to sustain it. Besides, if the true Church be "the pillar and ground of truth," (*i*) that certainly can be no Church where delusion and falsehood have usurped the dominion.

(*h*) Ephes. ii. 20.(*i*) 1 Tim. iii. 15.

II. As this is the state of things under the Papacy, it is easy to judge how much of the Church remains there. Instead of the ministry of the word, there reigns a corrupt government, composed of falsehoods, by which the pure light is suppressed or extinguished. An execrable sacrilege has been substituted for the supper of the Lord. The worship of God is deformed by a multifarious and intolerable mass of superstitions. The doctrine, without which Christianity cannot exist, has been entirely forgotten or exploded. The public assemblies have become schools of idolatry and impiety. In withdrawing ourselves, therefore, from the pernicious participation of so many enormities, there is no danger of separating ourselves from the Church of Christ. The communion of the Church was not instituted as a bond to confine us in idolatry, impiety, ignorance of God, and other evils; but rather as a mean to preserve us in the fear of God, and obedience of the truth. I know that the Papists give us the most magnificent commendations of their Church, to make us believe that there is no other in the world; and then, as if they had gained their point, they conclude all who dare to withdraw themselves from that Church which they describe, to be schismatics, and pronounce all to be heretics who venture to open their mouths in opposition to its doctrine. But by what reasons do they prove theirs to be the true Church? They allege from ancient records what formerly occurred in Italy, in France, in Spain; that they are descended from those holy men, who by sound doctrine founded and raised the Churches in these countries, and confirmed their doctrine and the edification of the Church by their blood; and that the Church, thus consecrated among them, both by spiritual gifts, and by the blood of martyrs, has been preserved by a perpetual succession of bishops, so that it was never lost. They allege the importance attached to this succession by Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, and others. To those who are willing to attend me in a brief examination of these allegations, I will clearly shew that they are frivolous, and manifestly ludicrous. I would likewise exhort those who advance them, to pay a serious attention to the subject, if I thought my arguments could produce any effect upon them; but as



their sole object is to promote their own interest by every method in their power, without any regard to truth, I shall content myself with making a few observations, with which good men, and inquirers after truth, may be able to answer their cavils. In the first place, I ask them, why they allege nothing respecting Africa and Egypt, and all Asia. It is because in all those countries there has been a failure of this sacred succession of bishops, by virtue of which they boast that the Church has been preserved among them. They come to this point therefore, that they have the true Church, because from its commencement it has never been destitute of bishops, for that some have been succeeded by others in an uninterrupted series. But what if I oppose them with the example of Greece? I ask them again therefore, why they assert that the Church has been lost among the Greeks, among whom there has never been any interruption of that succession of bishops, which they consider as the sole guard and preservative of the Church? They call the Greeks schismatics. For what reason? Because it is pretended, they have lost their privilege by revolting from the Apostolical see. But do not they much more deserve to lose it, who have revolted from Christ himself? It follows therefore, that their plea of uninterrupted succession is a vain pretence, unless the truth of Christ, which was transmitted from the fathers, be permanently retained pure and uncorrupted by their posterity.

III. The pretensions of the Romanists therefore, in the present day, are no other than those which appear to have been formerly set up by the Jews, when they were reproved by the prophets of the Lord for blindness, impiety, and idolatry. For as the Jews boasted of the temple, the ceremonies and the priesthood, in which things they firmly believed the Church to consist; so, instead of the Church, the Papists produce certain external forms, which are often at a great distance from the Church, and are not at all necessary to its existence. Wherefore we need no other argument to refute them, than that which was urged by Jeremiah against that foolish confidence of the Jews; "Trust ye not in lying words, saying: The temple of the Lord, the temple of the

Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.” (*k*) For the Lord acknowledges no place as his temple, where his word is not heard and devoutly observed. So, though the glory of God resided between the cherubim in the sanctuary, and he had promised his people that he would make it his permanent seat; yet when the priests had corrupted his worship by perverse superstitions, he departed, and left the place without any sanctity. If that temple, which appeared to be consecrated to the perpetual residence of God, could be forsaken and desecrated by him, there can be no reason for their pretending that God is so attached to persons or places, or confined to external observances, as to be constrained to remain among those who have nothing but the name and appearance of the Church. And this is the argument which is maintained by Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, from the ninth chapter to the eleventh. For it had violently disturbed weak consciences, to observe that while the Jews appeared to be the people of God, they not only rejected, but also persecuted the doctrine of the Gospel. Therefore after having discussed that doctrine, he removes this difficulty; and denies the claim of those Jews, who were enemies of the truth, to be considered as the Church, though in other respects they wanted nothing that could be requisite to its external form. And the only reason for this denial was, because they would not receive Christ. He speaks rather more explicitly in the Epistle to the Galatians, (*l*) where, in a comparison between Ishmael and Isaac, he represents many as occupying a place in the Church, who have no right to the inheritance, because they are not the first-born of a free mother. Hence he proceeds to a contrast of the two Jerusalems, because as the law was given on Mount Sinai, but the Gospel came forth from Jerusalem, so many who have been born and educated in bondage, confidently boast of being the children of God and of the Church, and though they are themselves a spurious offspring, look down with contempt on his genuine and legitimate children. But as for us, on the contrary, who have once heard it proclaimed from heaven, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son,” let us confide in this invio-

(*k*) Jer.vii. 4.(*l*) Gal. iv.

lable decree, and resolutely despise their ridiculous pretensions. For if they pride themselves on an external profession, Ishmael also was circumcised. If they depend on antiquity, he was the first-born. Yet we see that he was rejected. If the cause of this be inquired, Paul tells us that none are accounted children but those who are born of the pure and legitimate seed of the word. (*m*) According to this reason, the Lord declares that he is not confined to impious priests, because he had made a covenant with their father Levi to be his angel or messenger. (*n*) He even retorts on them their false boasting, with which they were accustomed to oppose the prophets, that the dignity of the priesthood ought to be held in peculiar estimation. This he readily admits, and argues with them on this ground, because he was prepared to observe the covenant, whereas they failed of discharging the correspondent obligations, and therefore deserved to be rejected. See then, what such succession is worth, unless it be connected with a continual imitation and conformity. Without this, the descendants, who are convicted of a departure from their predecessors, must immediately be deprived of all honour. Unless, indeed, because Caiaphas was the successor of many pious priests, and there had been an uninterrupted series even from Aaron to him, that execrable assembly be deemed worthy to be called the Church. But it would not be tolerated even in earthly governments, that the tyranny of Caligula, Nero, Heliogabalus, and others, should be called the true state of the republic, because they succeeded the Brutii, the Scipios, and the Canilli. But in regard to the government of the Church, nothing can be more frivolous than to place the succession in the persons, to the neglect of the doctrine. And nothing was farther from the intentions of the holy doctors, whose authority they falsely obtrude upon us, than to prove that Churches existed by a kind of hereditary right, wherever there has been a constant succession of bishops. But as it was beyond all doubt that, from the beginning even down to their times, no change had taken place in the doctrine, they assumed, what would suffice for the confutation of all new errors, that they were

(*m*) Rom. ix. 6—8.(*n*) Mal. ii. 1—9.



repugnant to the doctrine which had been constantly and unanimously maintained even from the days of the Apostles. They will gain nothing, therefore, by persisting to disguise themselves under the name of the Church. The name we regard with becoming reverence ; but when they come to the definition, they are miserably embarrassed, for they substitute an execrable harlot in the place of the holy spouse of Christ. That we may not be deceived by such a substitution, beside other admonitions, let us remember this of Augustine : for, speaking of the Church, he says, “ It is sometimes obscured and beclouded by a multitude of scandals ; sometimes it appears quiet and unmolested in a season of tranquillity, and is sometimes disturbed and overwhelmed with the waves of tribulations and temptations.” He produces examples, that those who were its firmest pillars, have either undauntedly suffered banishment on account of the faith, or secluded themselves from all society.

IV. In the same manner, the Romanists in the present day harass us, and terrify ignorant persons with the name of the Church, though there are no greater enemies to Christ than themselves. Although they may pretend therefore to the temple, the priesthood, and other similar forms, this vain glitter which dazzles the eyes of the simple, ought by no means to induce us to admit the existence of a Church, where we cannot discover the word of God. For this is the perpetual mark by which our Lord has characterised his people ; “ Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” (o) And, “ I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” “ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” He had just before said ; “ The sheep follow their shepherd : for they know his voice : and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.” (p) Why then do we wilfully run into error in forming a judgment of the Church, since Christ has designated it by an unequivocal character, that wherever it is discovered, it infallibly assures us of the existence of a Church, and wher-

(o) John xviii. 37.

(p) John x. 4, 5, 14, 27.

ever it is wanting, there is no real evidence of a Church left. For Paul declares the Church to be founded, not upon the opinions of men, not upon the priesthood, but upon the "doctrine of the apostles and prophets." (*q*) And Jerusalem is to be distinguished from Babylon, the Church of Christ from the synagogue of Satan, by this difference, by which Christ has discriminated them from each other: "He that is of God, heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." (*r*) In fine, as the Church is the kingdom of Christ, and he reigns only by his word, can any person doubt the falsehood of those pretensions, which represent the kingdom of Christ as destitute of his sceptre, that is, of his holy word?

V. With respect to the charge which they bring against us of heresy and schism, because we preach a different doctrine from theirs, and submit not to their laws, and hold separate assemblies for prayers, for baptism, for the administration of the Lord's Supper, and other sacred exercises; it is indeed a most heavy accusation, but such as by no means requires a long or laborious defence. The appellations of heretics and schismatics are applied to persons who cause dissension, and destroy the communion of the Church. Now this communion is preserved by two bonds; agreement in sound doctrine, and brotherly love. Between heretics and schismatics, therefore, Augustine makes the following distinction: that the former corrupt the purity of the faith by false doctrines, and that the latter break the bond of affection, sometimes even while they retain the same faith. But it is also to be remarked, that this union of affection is dependent on the unity of faith, as its foundation, end, and rule. Let us remember, therefore, that whenever the unity of the Church is enjoined upon us in the Scripture, it is required, that while our minds hold the same doctrines in Christ, our wills should likewise be united in mutual benevolence in Christ. Therefore, Paul, when he exhorts us to it, assumes as a foundation, that there is, "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." (*s*) And when he inculcates our

(*q*) Ephes. ii. 20.(*r*) John viii. 47.(*s*) Ephes. iv. 5.

being "like-minded, and having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind," (t) he immediately adds, that this should be in Christ, or according to Christ; signifying that all union which is formed without the word of the Lord, is a faction of the impious, and not an association of the faithful.

VI. Cyprian, also, after the example of Paul, deduces the origin of all ecclesiastical concord from the supreme bishopric of Christ. He afterwards subjoins; "There is but one Church, which is widely extended into a multitude by the offspring of its fertility; just as there are many rays of the sun, but the light is one; and a tree has many branches, but only one trunk, fixed on a firm root. And when many rivers issue from one source, though by its exuberant abundance the stream is multiplied into numerous currents, yet the unity of the fountain still remains. Separate a ray from the body of the sun, and its unity sustains no division. Break off a branch from a tree, and the broken branch can never bud. Cut off a river from the source, and it immediately dries up. So the Church, overspread with the light of the Lord, is extended over the whole world; yet it is one and the same light which is universally diffused." No representation could be more elegant to express that inseparable connection which subsists between all the members of Christ. We see how he continually recalls us to the fountain-head. Therefore, he pronounces the origin of heresies and schisms to be, that men neither return to the source of truth, nor seek the Head, nor attend to the doctrine of the heavenly Master. Now let the Romanists exclaim that we are heretics, because we have withdrawn from their church; while the sole cause of our secession has been, that theirs cannot possibly be the pure profession of the truth. I say nothing of their having expelled us with anathemas and execrations. But this reason is more than sufficient for our exculpation, unless they are determined to pronounce sentence of schism also against the apostles, with whom we have but one common cause. Christ, I say, foretold to his apos-

(t) Phil. ii. 2, 5.



ties, that for his name's sake they should be cast out of the synagogues. (v) Now those synagogues, of which he spoke, were then accounted legitimate Churches. Since it is evident then that we have been cast out, and we are prepared to prove that this has been done for the name of Christ, it is necessary to inquire into the cause, before any thing be determined respecting us, either on one side or on the other. But this point I readily relinquish to them. It is sufficient for me that it was necessary for us to withdraw from them, in order to approach to Christ.

VII. But it will be still more evident, in what estimation we ought to hold all the Churches who have submitted to the tyranny of the Roman pontiff, if we compare them with the ancient Church of Israel, as delineated by the prophets. There was a true Church among the Jews and the Israelites, while they continued to observe the laws of the covenant; because they then obtained from the favour of God, those things which constitute a Church. They had the doctrine of truth in the law; the ministry of it was committed to the priests and prophets; they were initiated into the Church by the sign of circumcision; and were exercised in other sacraments for the confirmation of their faith. There is no doubt that the commendations, with which the Lord has honoured his Church, truly belonged to their society. But after they deserted the law of the Lord, and fell into idolatry and superstition, they partly lost this privilege. For who would dare to refuse the title of a Church to those among whom God deposited the preaching of his word, and the observance of his mysteries? On the other hand, who would dare to give the appellation of a Church, without any exception, to that society, where the word of God is openly and fearlessly trampled under foot; where its ministry, the principal sinew, and even the soul of the Church, is discontinued?

VIII. What, then, it will be said, was there no particle of a Church left among the Jews from the moment of their defection to idolatry? The answer is easy. In the first place, I observe, that in this defection, there were several degrees.

Nor will we maintain the fall of Judah, and that of Israel, to have been exactly the same, at the time when they both began to depart from the pure worship of God. When Jeroboam made the calves in opposition to the express prohibition of God, and dedicated a place which it was not lawful to use for the oblation of sacrifices, in this case religion was totally corrupted. The Jews polluted themselves with practical impieties and superstitions, before they made any unlawful changes in the external forms of religion. For though they generally adopted many corrupt ceremonies in the time of Rehoboam, yet as the doctrine of the law, and the priesthood, and the rites which God had instituted, were still preserved at Jerusalem, the faithful had in that kingdom a tolerable *form of a Church*. Among the Israelites, there was no reformation down to the reign of Ahab, and in his time there was an alteration for the worse. Of the succeeding kings, even to the subversion of the kingdom, some resembled Ahab, and others, who would be a little better, followed the example of Jeroboam : but all, without exception, were impious idolaters. In Judah there were various changes ; some kings corrupted the worship of God with false and groundless superstitions, and others restored religion from its abuses ; till at length, the priests themselves polluted the temple of God with idolatrous and abominable rites.

IX. Now, however the Papists may extenuate their vices, let them deny, if they can, that the state of religion is as corrupt and depraved among them, as it was in the kingdom of Israel, in the time of Jeroboam. But they practise a grosser idolatry, and their doctrine is equally, if not more, impure. God is my witness, and all men who are endued with moderate judgment, and the fact itself declares, that in this I am guilty of no exaggeration. Now when they try to drive us into the communion of their Church, they require two things of us ; first, that we should communicate in all their prayers, sacraments, and ceremonies ; secondly, that whatever honour, power, and jurisdiction, Christ has conferred upon his Church, we should attribute the same to theirs. With respect to the first point, I confess that the prophets who were at Jerusalem, when the state of affairs there was very corrupt, neither

offered up sacrifices apart from others, nor held separate assemblies for prayer. For they had the express command of God, that they were to assemble in the temple of Solomon; and they knew that the Levitical priests, because they had been ordained by the Lord as ministers of the sacrifices, and had not been deposed, however unworthy they might be of such honour, still retained the lawful possession of that place. But, what is the principal point of the whole controversy, they were not constrained to join in any superstitious worship; on the contrary, they engaged in no service that was not of Divine institution. But what resemblance is there to this among the Papists? we can scarcely assemble with them on a single occasion, without polluting ourselves with open idolatry. The principal bond of their communion is certainly the mass, which we abominate as the greatest sacrilege. Whether we are right or wrong in this, will be seen in another place. It is sufficient at present, to shew that in this respect, our case is different from that of the prophets, who though they were present at the sacrifices of impious persons, were never compelled to use, or to witness, any ceremonies but those which God had instituted. And if we wish to have an example entirely similar, we must take it from the kingdom of Israel. According to the regulations of Jeroboam, circumcision continued, sacrifices were offered, the law was regarded as sacred, the people invoked the same God whom their fathers had worshipped; yet, on account of novel ceremonies invented in opposition to the Divine prohibitions, God disapproved and condemned all that was done there. Shew me a single prophet, or any pious man, who even once worshipped or offered sacrifice at Bethel. They knew that they could not do it without contaminating themselves with sacrilege. We have established this point therefore, that the attachment of pious persons to the communion of the Church ought not to be carried to such an extent, as to oblige them to remain in it, if it degenerated into profane and impure rites.

X. But against their second requisition, we contend upon still stronger ground. For if the Church be held in such consideration that we are required to revere its judgment, to obey its authority, to receive its admonitions, to fall under its



censures, and scrupulously and uniformly to adhere to its communion, we cannot allow their claim to the character of the Church, without necessarily obliging ourselves to subjection and obedience. Yet we readily concede to them what the prophets conceded to the Jews and Israelites of their time, when things among them were in a similar, or even in a better state. But we see how they frequently exclaim, that their assemblies were iniquitous meetings, (*w*) a concurrence in which were as criminal as a renunciation of God. And certainly if those assemblies were Churches, it follows that Elijah, Micaiah, and others in Israel, were strangers to the Church of God; and the same would be true of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, and others of that description in Judah, whom the false prophets, priests, and people of their day, hated and execrated as if they had been worse than any heathens. If such assemblies were Churches, then the Church is not the pillar of truth, but a foundation of falsehood, not the sanctuary of the living God, but a receptacle of idols. They found themselves under a necessity therefore of withdrawing from all connection with those assemblies, which were nothing but a conspiracy against God. For the same reason, if any one acknowledges the assemblies of the present day, which are contaminated with idolatry, superstition, and false doctrine, as true Churches, in full communion with which a Christian man ought to continue, and in whose doctrine he ought to coincide, this will be a great error. For if they be Churches, they possess the power of the keys; but the keys are inseparably connected with the word, which is exploded from among them. Again, if they be Churches, that promise of Christ must be applicable to them; "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." (*x*) On the contrary, all who sincerely profess themselves to be the servants of Christ, they expel from their communion. Either therefore the promise of Christ must be vain, or in this respect they are not Churches. Lastly, instead of the ministry of the word, they have schools of impiety, and a gulf of every

(*w*) Isaiah i. 13, 14.(*x*) Matt. xviii. 18.

species of errors. Either, therefore, in this respect they are not Churches, or no mark will be left to distinguish the legitimate assemblies of the faithful from the conventions of Turks.

XI. Nevertheless, as in former times the Jews continued in possession of some peculiar privileges of the Church, so we refuse not to acknowledge, among the Papists of the present day, those vestiges of the Church which it has pleased the Lord should remain among them after its removal. When God had once made his covenant with the Jews, it continued among them, rather because it was supported by its own stability in opposition to their impiety, than in consequence of their observance of it. Such, therefore, was the certainty and constancy of the Divine goodness, the covenant of the Lord remained among them; his faithfulness could not be obliterated by their perfidy; nor could circumcision be so profaned by their impure hands, but that it was always the true sign and sacrament of his covenant. Hence the children that were born to them, God calls his own, (*y*) though they could not have belonged to him but by a special benediction. So after he had deposited his covenant in France, Italy, Germany, Spain, and England, when those countries were oppressed by the tyranny of Antichrist, still in order that the covenant might remain inviolable, as a testimony of that covenant, he preserved Baptism among them, which being consecrated by his lips retains its virtue in opposition to all the impiety of men. He also by his providence caused other vestiges of the Church to remain, that it might not be entirely lost. And as buildings are frequently demolished in such a manner as to leave the foundations and ruins remaining, so the Lord has not suffered Antichrist either to subvert his Church from the foundation, or to level it with the ground; though, to punish the ingratitude of men who despised his word, he has permitted a dreadful concussion and dilapidation to be made; yet, amidst this devastation, he has been pleased to preserve the edifice from being entirely destroyed.

XII. While we refuse therefore to allow to the Papists the

title of the Church, without any qualification or restriction, we do not deny that there are Churches among them. We only contend for the true and legitimate constitution of the Church, which requires not only a communion in the sacraments, which are the signs of a Christian profession, but above all, an agreement in doctrine. Daniel and Paul had predicted that Antichrist would sit in the temple of God. (z) The head of that cursed and abominable kingdom, in the Western Church, we affirm to be the Pope. When his seat is placed in the temple of God, it suggests, that his kingdom will be such, that he will not abolish the name of Christ, or the Church. Hence it appears, that we by no means deny that Churches may exist, even under his tyranny; but he has profaned them by sacrilègious impiety, afflicted them by cruel despotism, corrupted and almost terminated their existence by false and pernicious doctrines, like poisonous potions: in such Churches, Christ lies half buried, the gospel is suppressed, piety exterminated, and the worship of God almost abolished; in a word, they are altogether in such a state of confusion, that they exhibit a picture of Babylon, rather than of the holy city of God. To conclude, I affirm that they are Churches, inasmuch as God has wonderfully preserved among them a remnant of his people, though miserably dispersed and dejected, and as there still remain some marks of the Church, especially those, the efficacy of which neither the craft of the devil, nor the malice of men, can ever destroy. But, on the other hand, because those marks, which we ought chiefly to regard in this controversy, are obliterated, I affirm, that the form of the legitimate Church is not to be found either in any one of their congregations, or in the body at large.

(z) Dan. ix. 27. 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.



## CHAPTER III.

*The Teachers and Ministers of the Church ; their Election and Office.*

**W**E must now treat of the order which it has been the Lord's will to appoint for the government of his Church. For although he alone ought to rule and reign in the Church, and to have all pre-eminence in it, and this government ought to be exercised and administered solely by his word ; yet as he dwells not among us by a visible presence, so as to make an audible declaration of his will to us, we have stated, that for this purpose he uses the ministry of men whom he employs as his delegates, not to transfer his right and honour to them, but only that he may himself do his work by their lips ; just as an artificer makes use of an instrument in the performance of his work. Some observations which I have made already, are necessary to be repeated here. It is true that he might do this either by himself, without any means or instruments, or even by angels ; but there are many reasons why he prefers making use of men. For in the first place, by this method he declares his kindness towards us, since he chooses from among men those who are to be his ambassadors to the world, to be the interpreters of his secret will, and even to act as his personal representatives. And thus he affords an actual proof, that when he so frequently calls us his temples, it is not an unmeaning appellation, since he gives answers to men, even from the mouths of men, as from a sanctuary. In the second place, this is a most excellent and beneficial method to train us to humility, since he accustoms us to obey his word, though it is preached to us by men like ourselves, and sometimes even of inferior rank. If he were himself to speak from heaven, there would be no wonder if his sacred oracles were instantly received with reverence, by the ears and hearts of all mankind. For who would not be

awed by his present power? who would not fall prostrate at the first view of infinite Majesty? who would not be confounded by that overpowering splendour? But when a contemptible mortal, who has just emerged from the dust, addresses us in the name of God, we give the best evidence of our piety and reverence towards God himself, if we readily submit to be instructed by his minister, who possesses no personal superiority to ourselves. For this reason also he has deposited the treasure of his heavenly wisdom in frail and earthen vessels, (a) in order to afford a better proof of the estimation in which we hold it. Besides, nothing was more adapted to promote brotherly love, than a mutual connection of men by this bond; while one is constituted the pastor to teach all the rest, and they who are commanded to be disciples, receive one common doctrine from the same mouth. For if each person were sufficient for himself, and had no need of the assistance of another, such is the pride of human nature, every one would despise others, and would also be despised by them. The Lord therefore has connected his Church together, by that which he foresaw would be the strongest bond for the preservation of their union, when he committed the doctrine of eternal life and salvation to men, that by their hands it might be communicated to others. Paul had this in view when he wrote to the Ephesians, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry,

(a) 2 Cor. iv. 7.

for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (b)

II. In this passage he shews that the ministry of men, which God employs in his government of the Church, is the principal bond which holds the faithful together in one body. He also indicates that the Church cannot be preserved in perfect safety, unless it be supported by these means which God has been pleased to appoint for its preservation. Christ, he says, "ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (c) And this is the way in which he does it. By means of his ministers, to whom he has committed this office, and on whom he has bestowed grace to discharge it, he dispenses and distributes his gifts to the Church, and even affords some manifestation of his own presence, by exerting the power of his Spirit in this his institution, that it may not be vain or ineffectual. Thus is the restoration of the saints effected; thus is the body of Christ edified; thus we grow up unto him who is our Head in all things, and are united with each other; thus we are all brought to the unity of Christ; if prophecy flourishes among us, if we receive the apostles, if we despise not the doctrine which is delivered to us. Whoever, therefore, either aims to abolish or undervalue this order, of which we are treating, and this species of government, attempts to disorganize the Church, or rather to subvert and destroy it altogether. For light and heat are not so essential to the sun, nor any meat and drink so necessary

(b) Eph. iv. 4—16.

(c) Eph. iv. 10.



to the nourishment and sustenance of the present life, as the apostolical and pastoral office is to the preservation of the Church in the world.

III. Therefore I have already remarked, that God hath frequently commended its dignity to us by every possible encomium, in order that we might hold it in the highest estimation and value, as more excellent than every thing else. That he confers a peculiar favour upon men by raising up teachers for them, he fully signifies, when he commands the prophet to exclaim, "How beautiful are the feet of him that publisheth peace:" (d) and when he calls the apostles "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." (e) Nor could that office be more splendidly distinguished than when he said to them, "He that heareth you, heareth me." (f) But there is no passage more remarkable than that in Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians, where he professedly discusses this question. He contends, that there is nothing more excellent or glorious than the ministry of the Gospel in the Church, inasmuch as it is the ministration of the Spirit, and of righteousness, and of eternal life. (g) The tendency of these and similar passages, is to preserve that mode of governing the Church by its ministers, which the Lord appointed to be of perpetual continuance, from sinking into disesteem; and, at length, falling into disuse through mere contempt. And how exceedingly necessary it is, he has not only declared in words, but shewn by examples. When he was pleased to illuminate Cornelius more fully with the light of his truth, he dispatched an angel from heaven to send Peter to him. When he designs to call Paul to the knowledge of himself, and to introduce him into the Church, he does not address him with his own voice, but sends him to a man, to receive the doctrine of salvation, and the sacrament of baptism. If it was not without sufficient reason, that an angel, who is the messenger of God, refrains from announcing the Divine will himself, and directs a man to be sent for in order to declare it; and that Christ, the sole teacher of the faithful, committed Paul to the instruction of a man, the

(d) Isaiah lii. 7.

(f) Luke x. 16.

(e) Matt. v. 13, 14.

(g) 2 Cor. iii. 6, &amp;c.

same Paul whom he had determined to elevate into the third heaven, and to favour with a miraculous revelation of things unspeakable; who can now dare to despise that ministry, or to neglect it as unnecessary, the utility and necessity of which God hath been pleased to evince by such examples?

IV. Those who preside over the government of the Church, according to the institution of Christ, are named by Paul, first, "apostles;" secondly, "prophets;" thirdly, "evangelists;" fourthly, "pastors;" lastly, "teachers." (*h*) Of these, only the two last sustain an ordinary office in the Church; the others were such as the Lord raised up at the commencement of his kingdom, and such as he still raises up on particular occasions, when required by the necessity of the times. The nature of the apostolic office, is manifest from this command: "Go preach the Gospel to every creature." (*i*) No certain limits are prescribed, but the whole world is assigned to them to be reduced to obedience to Christ; that by disseminating the Gospel wherever they could, they might erect his kingdom in all nations. Therefore Paul, when he wished to prove his apostleship, declares, not merely that he had gained some one city for Christ, but that he had propagated the Gospel far and wide, and that he had not built upon the foundations of others, but had planted Churches, where the name of the Lord had never been heard before. The "apostles" therefore were missionaries, who were to reduce the world from their revolt to true obedience to God, and to establish his kingdom universally by the preaching of the Gospel. Or, if you please, they were the first architects of the Church, appointed to lay its foundations all over the world. Paul gives the appellation of "prophets," not to all interpreters of the Divine will, but only to those who were honoured with some special revelation. Of these, either there are none in our day, or they are less conspicuous. By "evangelists," I understand those who were inferior to the apostles in dignity, but next to them in office, and who performed similar functions. Such were Luke, Timothy, Titus, and others of that description; and perhaps also the seventy disciples, whom Christ ordained to occupy the

(*h*) Eph. iv. 11.

(*i*) Mark xvi. 15.

second station after the apostles. (k) According to this interpretation, which appears to me perfectly consistent with the language and meaning of the apostle, those three offices were not instituted to be of perpetual continuance in the Church, but only for that age when Churches were to be raised where none had existed before, or were at least to be conducted from Moses to Christ. Though I do not deny, that even since that period God has sometimes raised up apostles, or evangelists in their stead, as he has done in our own time. For there was a necessity for such persons to recover the Church from the defection of Antichrist. Nevertheless, I call this an extraordinary office, because it has no place in well constituted Churches. Next follow "pastors" and "teachers," who are always indispensable to the Church. The difference between them I apprehend to be this: that teachers have no official concern with the discipline, or the administration of the sacraments, or with admonitions and exhortations, but only with the interpretation of the Scripture; whereas the pastoral office includes all these things.

V. We have now ascertained what offices were appointed to continue for a time in the government of the Church, and what were instituted to be of perpetual duration. If we connect the evangelists with the apostles, as sustaining the same office, we shall then have two offices of each description, corresponding to each other. For our pastors bear the same resemblance to the apostles, as our teachers do to the ancient prophets. The office of the prophets was more excellent, on account of the special gift of revelation, by which they were distinguished; but the office of teachers is executed in a similar manner, and has precisely the same end. So those twelve individuals, whom the Lord chose to promulgate the first proclamation of his Gospel to the world, preceded all others in order and dignity. For although, according to the meaning and etymology of the word, all the ministers of the Church may be called apostles, because they are all sent by the Lord, and are his messengers; yet as it was of great importance to have a certain knowledge of the

Calvin's Order

(k) Luke x. 1.

Calvin created Elder - giving them power in all acts of the Church



mission of persons who were to announce a thing new and unheard before, it was necessary that those twelve, together with Paul, who was afterwards added to their number, should be distinguished beyond all others by a peculiar title. Paul himself, indeed, gives this name to "Andronicus and Junia, who," he says, "are of note among the apostles;" (l) but when he means to speak with strict propriety, he never applies that name *except* to those of the first order that we have mentioned. And this is the common usage of the Scripture. But the province of pastors is the same as that of the apostles, except that they preside over particular Churches respectively committed to each of them. Of the nature of their functions let us now proceed to a more distinct statement.

VI. Our Lord, when he sent forth his apostles, commissioned them, as we have just remarked, to preach the Gospel and to baptize all believers for the remission of sins. (m) He had already commanded them to distribute the sacred symbols of his body and blood according to his own example. (n) Behold the sacred, inviolable, and perpetual law imposed upon those who call themselves successors of the apostles; it commands them to preach the Gospel, and to administer the sacraments. Hence we conclude, that those who neglect both these duties have no just pretensions to the character of apostles. But what shall we say of pastors? Paul speaks not only of himself, but of all who bear that office, when he says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." (o) Again, "A bishop must hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort, and to convince the gainsayers." (p) From these and similar passages which frequently occur, we may infer that the preaching of the gospel, and the administration of the sacraments, constitute the two principal parts of the pastoral office. Now the business of teaching is not confined to public discourses, but extends also to private admonitions. Thus Paul calls upon the Ephesians to witness the truth of

(l) Rom. xvi. 7.

(m) Matt. xxviii. 19.

(n) Luke xxii. 19.

(o) 1 Cor. iv. 1.

(p) Titus i. 7, 9.

his declaration, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." And a little after, "I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears." (q) But it is no part of my present design, to enumerate all the excellencies of a good pastor, but only to shew what is implied in the profession of those who call themselves pastors: namely, that they preside over the Church in that station, not that they may enjoy a respectable sinecure, but to instruct the people in true piety by the doctrine of Christ, to administer the holy mysteries, to maintain and exercise proper discipline. For the Lord denounces to all those who have been stationed as watchmen in the Church, that if any one perish in ignorance through their negligence, he will require the blood of such a person at their hands. (r) What Paul says of himself, belongs to them all; "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel," because "a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me." (s) Lastly, what the apostles did for the whole world, that every individual pastor ought to do for his flock to which he is appointed.

VII. While we assign to them all respectively their distinct Churches, yet we do not deny that a pastor, who is connected with one Church, may assist others, either when any disputes arise, which may require his presence, or when his advice is asked upon any difficult subject. But because, in order to preserve the peace of the Church, there is a necessity for such a regulation, as shall clearly define to every one what duty he has to do, lest they should all fall into disorder, and run hither and thither in uncertainty without any call; and lest those who feel more solicitude for their personal accommodation than for the edification of the Church, should, without any cause but their own caprice, all resort to one place, and leave the Churches destitute: this distribution ought as far as possible to be generally observed, that every one may be content with his own limits, and not invade the

(q) Acts xx. 20, 21, 31.

(r) Ezek. iii. 17, 18.

(s) 1 Cor. ix. 16. 17.

province of another. Nor is this an invention of men, but an institution of God himself. For we read that Paul and Barnabas “ordained elders in the respective Churches of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch;” (*t*) and Paul himself directed Titus to “ordain elders in every city.” (*v*) So in other passages he mentions “the bishops at Philippi,” (*w*) and Archippus, the bishop of the Colossians. (*x*) And a remarkable sermon of his is preserved by Luke, addressed to “the elders of the Church of Ephesus.” (*y*) Whoever, therefore, has undertaken the government and charge of one Church, let him know that he is bound to this law of the Divine call: not that he is fixed to his station so as never to be permitted to leave it in a regular and orderly manner, if the public benefit should require it; but he who has been called to one place, ought never to think either of departing from his situation, or relinquishing the office altogether, from any motive of personal convenience or advantage. But if it be expedient that he should remove to another station, he ought not to attempt this on his own private opinion, but to be guided by the public authority of the Church.

VIII. In calling those who preside over Churches by the appellations of “bishops,” “elders,” and “pastors,” without any distinction, I have followed the usage of the Scripture, which applies all these terms to express the same meaning. For to all who discharge the ministry of the word, it gives the title of “bishops.” So when Paul enjoins Titus to “ordain elders in every city,” he immediately adds: “For a bishop must be blameless.” (*z*) So in another epistle he salutes more bishops than one in one Church. (*a*) And in the Acts he is declared to have sent for the elders of the Church of Ephesus, whom in his address to them he calls “bishops.” (*b*) Here it must be observed, that we have enumerated only those offices which consist in the ministry of the word; nor does Paul mention any other in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which we have quoted. But in the

(*t*) Acts xiv. 21, 23.(*x*) Col. iv. 17.(*a*) Phil. i. 1.(*v*) Titus i. 5.(*y*) Acts xx. 17, &c.(*b*) Acts xx. 17, 28. επισκοπος.(*w*) Phil. i. 1.(*z*) Titus i. 5, 7.



Epistle to the Romans, and the first Epistle to the Corinthians, he enumerates others, as “powers,” “gifts of healing,” “interpretation of tongues,” “governments,” “care of the poor.” (c) Those functions which were merely temporary, I omit, as foreign to our present subject. But there are two which perpetually remain; “government,” and “the care of the poor.” “Governors,” I apprehend, to have been persons of advanced years, selected from the people, to unite with the bishops in giving admonitions and exercising discipline. For no other interpretation can be given of that injunction, “He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence.” (d) For from the beginning, every Church has had its senate or council, composed of pious, grave, and holy men, who were invested with that jurisdiction in the correction of vices, of which we shall soon treat. Now that this was not the regulation of a single age, experience itself demonstrates. This office of government is necessary, therefore, in every age.

IX. The care of the poor was committed to the “deacons.” The Epistle to the Romans, however, mentions two functions of this kind. “He that giveth,” says the apostle, “let him do it with simplicity; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.” (e) Now as it is certain that he there speaks of the public offices of the Church, it follows that there were two distinct orders of deacons. Unless my judgment deceive me, the former clause refers to the deacons who administered the alms; and the other to those who devoted themselves to the care of poor and sick persons; such as the widows mentioned by Paul to Timothy. (f) For women could execute no other public office, than by devoting themselves to the service of the poor. If we admit this, and it ought to be fully admitted, there will be two classes of deacons, of whom one will serve the Church in dispensing the property given to the poor, the other in taking care of the poor themselves.—Though the word itself (διακονια) is of more extensive signification, yet the Scripture particularly gives the title of “deacons” to those whom the Church has appointed to dispense

(c) 1 Cor. xii. 28. δυναμεις, χαρισματα ιαματων, γενη γλωσσων, κυβερνησεις.

Rom. xii. 8. ο μελειαιδους, εν απλοητι, ο ελεων, εν ελαιοητι.

(d) Rom. xii. 8.

(e) Rom. xii. 8.

(f) 1 Tim. v. 9, 10.

the alms and take care of the poor, and constituted stewards as it were of the common treasury of the poor; and whose origin, institution, and office, are described in the Acts of the Apostles. For “when there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration,” (g) the apostles pleaded their inability to discharge both offices, of the ministry of the word and the service of tables, and said to the multitude, “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” See what were the characters of the deacons in the apostolic Church, and what ought to be the characters of ours in conformity to the primitive example.

X. Now as “all things” in the Church are required to “be done decently and in order,” (h) there is nothing in which this ought to be more diligently observed, than the constitution of its government; because there would be more danger from disorder in this case than in any other. Therefore, that restless and turbulent persons may not presumptuously intrude themselves into the office of teaching or of governing, it is expressly provided, that no one shall assume a public office in the Church without a call. In order, therefore, that any one may be accounted a true minister of the Church, it is necessary in the first place, that he be regularly called to it, and in the second place, that he answer his call; that is, by undertaking and executing the office assigned to him. This may frequently be observed in Paul; who, when he wishes to prove his apostleship, almost always alleges his call, together with his fidelity in the execution of the office. If so eminent a minister of Christ dare not arrogate to himself an authority to require his being heard in the Church, but in consequence of his appointment to it by a Divine commission, and his faithful discharge of the duty assigned him; what extreme impudence must it be, if any man, destitute of both these characters, should claim such an honour for himself? But having already spoken of

(g) Acts vi. 1—3.

(h) 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

the necessity of discharging the office, let us now confine ourselves to the call.

XI. Now the discussion of this subject includes four branches: what are the qualifications of ministers; in what manner they are to be chosen; by whom they ought to be appointed; and with what rite or ceremony they are to be introduced into their office. I speak of the external and solemn call, which belongs to the public order of the Church; passing over that secret call, of which every minister is conscious to himself before God, but which is not known to the Church. This secret call, however, is the certain testimony of our heart, that we accept the office offered to us, not from ambition or avarice, or any other unlawful motive, but from a sincere fear of God, and an ardent zeal for the edification of the Church. This, as I have hinted, is indispensable to every one of us, if we would approve our ministry in the sight of God. In the view of the Church, however, he who enters on his office with an evil conscience, is nevertheless duly called, provided his iniquity be not discovered. It is even common to speak of private persons as called to the ministry, who appear to be adapted and qualified for the discharge of its duties; because learning, connected with piety and other endowments of a good pastor, constitutes a kind of preparation for it. For those whom the Lord hath destined to so important an office, he first furnishes with those talents which are requisite to its execution, that they may not enter upon it empty and unprepared. Hence Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, when he intended to treat of the offices themselves, first enumerated the gifts which ought to be possessed by the persons who sustain those offices. (i) But as this is the first of the four points which I have proposed, let us now proceed to it.

XII. The qualifications of those who ought to be chosen bishops, are stated at large by Paul in two passages. (k) The sum of all he says is, that none are to be chosen but men of sound doctrine and a holy life, not chargeable with

(i) 1 Cor. xii. 7, &amp;c.

(k) 1 Tim. iii. 1, &amp;c. Titus i. 7, &amp;c.



any fault that may destroy their authority, or disgrace their doctrine. The same rule is laid down for the deacons and governors. Constant care is required, that they be not unequal to the burden imposed upon them, or in other words, that they be endowed with those talents which are necessary to the discharge of their duty. So when Christ was about to send forth his apostles, he furnished them with such means and powers as were indispensable to their success. (l) And Paul, after having delineated the character of a good and genuine bishop, admonishes Timothy not to contaminate himself by the appointment of any one of a different description. (m) The question relating to the manner in which they are to be chosen, I refer not to the form of election, but to the religious awe which ought to be observed in it. Hence the fasting and prayer, which Luke states to have been practised by the faithful at the ordination of elders. (n) For knowing themselves to be engaged in a business of the highest importance, they dared not attempt any thing but with the greatest reverence and solicitude. And above all things they were earnest in prayers and supplications to God for the spirit of wisdom and discretion.

XIII. The third inquiry we proposed was, by whom ministers are to be chosen. Now for this no certain rule can be gathered from the appointment of the apostles, which was a case somewhat different from the common call of other ministers. For as theirs was an extraordinary office, it was necessary, in order to render it conspicuous by some eminent character, that they who were to sustain it should be called and appointed by the mouth of the Lord himself. The apostles, therefore, entered upon their work, not in consequence of any human election, but empowered by the sole command of God and of Christ. Hence when they wish to substitute another in the place of Judas, they refrain from a certain appointment of any one, but nominate two, that the Lord may declare by lot which of them he has chosen as the successor. (o) In the same sense must be understood the declaration of Paul, that

(l) Luke xxi. 15. xxiv. 49. Acts i. 8.

(m) Acts xiv. 23.

(n) 1 Tim. v. 22.

(o) Acts i. 23.

he had been created “an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father.” (p) The first clause, *not of men*, was applicable to him in common with all pious ministers of the word; for no man can lawfully exercise this ministry without having been called by God. The other clause was special and peculiar to himself. When he glories in this, therefore, he not only claims the possession of what belongs to every good pastor, but likewise brings forward an evidence of his apostleship. For whereas there were among the Galatians some who, from an eagerness to diminish his authority, represented him as a common disciple deputed by the primary apostles; in order to vindicate the dignity of his preaching, against which he knew these artifices were directed, he found it necessary to shew that he was not inferior to the other apostles in any respect. Wherefore he affirms, that he had not been elected by the judgment of men, like some ordinary bishop, but by the mouth and clear revelation of the Lord himself.

XIV. But that the election and appointment of bishops by men is necessary to constitute a legitimate call to the office, no sober person will deny, while there are so many testimonies of scripture to establish it. Nor is it contradicted by that declaration of Paul, that he was “an apostle, not of men, nor by man;” (q) since he is not speaking in that passage of the ordinary election of ministers, but claiming to himself what was the special privilege of the apostles. The immediate designation of Paul, by the Lord himself, to this peculiar privilege, was nevertheless accompanied with the form of an ecclesiastical call, for Luke states, that “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them.” (r) What end could be answered by this separation and imposition of hands, after the Holy Spirit had testified their election, unless it was the preservation of the order of the Church in designating ministers by men? God could not sanction that order, therefore, by a more illustrious example than when, after having declared that he had con-

(p) Gal. i. 1.

(q) Gal. i. 1.

(r) Acts xiii. 2.

stituted Paul the apostle of the Gentiles, he nevertheless directed him to be designated by the Church. The same may be observed in the election of Matthias. (s) For the apostolic office being of such high importance that they could not venture to fill up their number by the choice of any one person from their own judgment, they appointed two, one of whom was to be chosen by lot; that so the election might obtain a positive sanction from heaven, and yet that the order of the Church might not be altogether neglected.

XV. Here it is inquired, whether a minister ought to be chosen by the whole Church, or only by the other ministers and the governors who preside over the discipline, or whether he may be appointed by the authority of an individual? Those who attribute this right to any one man, quote what Paul says to Titus: "For this cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city:" (t) and to Timothy; "Lay hands suddenly on no man." (v) But they are exceedingly mistaken, if they suppose that either Timothy at Ephesus, or Titus in Crete, exercised a sovereign power to regulate every thing according to his own pleasure. For they presided over the people, only to lead them by good and salutary counsels, not to act alone to the exclusion of all others. But that this may not be thought to be an invention of mine, I will prove it by a similar example. For Luke relates, that elders were ordained in the Churches by Paul and Barnabas, but at the same time he distinctly marks the manner in which this was done,—namely, by the suffrages or votes of the people: for this is the meaning of the term he there employs; χειροτονησαυτες πρεσβυτερος καὶ ἐκκλησιαν. (w) Those two apostles, therefore, ordained them; but the whole multitude, according to the custom observed in elections among the Greeks, declared by the elevation of their hands who was the object of their choice. So the Roman historians frequently speak of the consul, who held the assemblies, as *appointing* the new magistrates, for no other reason but because he received the suffrages and presided at the election. Surely it is not credible that Paul granted to Timothy

(s) Acts i. 23. (t) Titus i. 5. (v) 1 Tim. v. 22. (w) Acts xiv. 23.



and Titus more power than he assumed to himself; but we see that he was accustomed to ordain bishops according to the suffrages of the people. Former passages, therefore, ought to be understood in the same manner, to guard against all infringement of the common right and liberty of the Church. It is a good remark, therefore, of Cyprian, when he contends, "that it proceeds from Divine authority, that a priest should be elected publicly in the presence of all the people, and that he should be approved as a worthy and fit person by the public judgment and testimony." In the case of the Levitical priests, we find it was commanded by the Lord, that they should be brought forward in the view of the people before their consecration. Nor was Matthias added to the number of the apostles, nor were the seven deacons appointed, without the presence and approbation of the people.— "These examples," says Cyprian, "shew that the ordination of a priest ought not to be performed but with the knowledge and concurrence of the people, in order that the election which shall have been examined by the testimony of all, may be just and legitimate." We find, therefore, that it is a legitimate ministry according to the word of God, when those who appear suitable persons are appointed with the consent and approbation of the people; but that other pastors ought to preside over the election, to guard the multitude from falling into any improprieties, through inconstancy, intrigue, or confusion.

XVI. There remains the Form of ordination, which is the last point that we have mentioned relative to the call of ministers. Now it appears, that when the apostles introduced any one into the ministry, they used no other ceremony than imposition of hands. This rite, I believe, descended from the custom of the Hebrews, who, when they wished to bless and consecrate any thing, presented it to God by imposition of hands. Thus when Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh, he laid his hands upon them. (x) This custom was followed by our Lord, when he prayed over infants. (y) It was with the same design, I apprehend, that the Jews were directed

(x) Gen. xlviii. 14.

(y) Matt. xix. 15.

in the law to lay their hands upon their sacrifices. Wherefore the imposition of the hands of the apostles was an indication that they offered to God the person whom they introduced into the ministry. They used the same ceremony over those on whom they conferred the visible gifts of the Spirit. But be that as it may, this was the solemn rite invariably practised, whenever any one was called to the ministry of the Church. Thus they ordained pastors and teachers, and thus they ordained deacons. Now though there is no express precept for the imposition of hands, yet since we find it to have been constantly used by the apostles, such a punctual observance of it by them ought to have the force of a precept with us. And certainly this ceremony is highly useful both to recommend to the people the dignity of the ministry, and to admonish the person ordained that he is no longer his own master, but devoted to the service of God and the Church. Besides, it will not be an unmeaning sign, if it be restored to its true origin. For if the Spirit of God institute nothing in the Church in vain, we shall perceive that this ceremony, which proceeded from him, is not without its use, provided it be not perverted by a superstitious abuse. Finally, it is to be remarked, that the imposition of hands on the ministers was not the act of the whole multitude, but was confined to the pastors. It is not certain whether this ceremony was, in all cases, performed by more pastors than one, or whether it was ever the act of a single pastor. The former appears to have been the fact in the case of the seven deacons, of Paul and Barnabas, and some few others. (z) But Paul speaks of himself as having laid hands upon Timothy, without any mention of many others having united with him. "I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands." (a) His expression in the other Epistle, of "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," (b) I apprehend not to signify a company of elders, but to denote the ordination itself; as if he had said, Take care that the grace which thou receivedst by the laying on of hands, when I ordained thee a presbyter, be not in vain.

(z) Acts vi. 6. xiii. 3.

(a) 2 Tim. i. 6.

(b) 1 Tim. iv. 14.

## CHAPTER IV.

*The State of the ancient Church, and the Mode of Government practised before the Papacy.*

**H**ITHERTO we have treated of the mode of government in the Church, as it has been delivered to us by the pure word of God, and of the offices in it, as they were instituted by Christ. Now, that all these things may be more clearly and familiarly displayed, and more deeply impressed upon our minds, it will be useful to examine what was the form of the ancient Church, in these particulars. It will place before our eyes an actual exemplification of the Divine institution. For though the bishops of those times published many canons, in which they seemed to express more than had been expressed in the Holy Scriptures; yet they were so cautious in framing their whole economy according to the sole standard of the word of God, that in this respect scarcely any thing can be detected among them inconsistent with that word. But though there might be something to be regretted in their regulations, yet because they directed their sincere and zealous efforts to preserve the institution of God, without deviating from it to any considerable extent, it will be highly useful in this place to give a brief sketch of what their practice was. As we have stated that there are three kinds of ministers recommended to us in the Scripture, so the ancient Church divided all the ministers it had into three orders. For from the order of presbyters, they chose some for pastors and teachers; the others presided over the discipline and corrections. To the deacons was committed the care of the poor and the distribution of the alms. *Readers* and *Acoluthi* were not names of certain offices, but young men, to whom they also gave the name of clergy; they were accustomed from their youth to certain exercises in the service of the Church, that they might better understand to what they were destined, and might enter upon their office better prepared for it in due time; as I shall soon shew more at large. There-

*Every Bishop - Pastor or Minister. Teacher*



fore Jerome, after having mentioned five orders of the Church, enumerates bishops, presbyters, deacons, the faithful, or believers at large, and catechumens, or persons who had not yet been baptized, but had applied for instruction in the Christian faith. Thus he assigns no particular place to the rest of the clergy and the monks.

II. All those to whom the office of teaching was assigned, were denominated presbyters. To guard against dissension, the general consequence of equality, the presbyters in each city chose one of their own number, whom they distinguished by the title of *bishop*. The bishop, however, was not so superior to the rest in honour and dignity, as to have any dominion over his colleagues, but the functions performed by a consul in the senate, such as, to propose things for consideration, to collect the votes, to preside over the rest in the exercise of advice, admonition, and exhortation, to regulate all the proceedings by his authority, and to carry into execution whatever had been decreed by the general voice;—such were the functions exercised by the bishop in the assembly of the presbyters. And that this arrangement was introduced by human agreement, on account of the necessity of the times, is acknowledged by the ancient writers themselves. Thus Jerome, in his Epistle to Titus, says; “A presbyter is the same as a bishop. And before dissensions in religion were produced by the instigation of the devil, and one said, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Cephas, the Churches were governed by a common council of presbyters. Afterwards, in order to destroy the seeds of dissensions, the whole charge was committed to one. Therefore, as the presbyters know that according to the custom of the Church they are subject to the bishop who presides over them; so let the bishops know that their superiority to the presbyters is more from custom than from the appointment of the Lord, and they ought to unite together in the government of the Church.” In another place, he shews the antiquity of this institution; for he says, that at Alexandria, even from Mark the Evangelist, to Heraclas and Dionysius, the presbyters always chose one of their body to preside over them, whom they called their bishop. Every city, therefore, had its college of

presbyters, who were pastors and teachers. For they all executed the duties of teaching, exhorting, and correcting, among the people, as Paul enjoins bishops to do ; (c) and in order to leave successors behind them, they laboured in training young men, who had enlisted themselves in the sacred warfare. To every city was assigned a certain district, which received presbyters from it, and was reckoned as a part of that Church. Every assembly, as I have stated, for the sole purpose of preserving order and peace, was under the direction of one bishop, who, while he had the precedence of all others in dignity, was himself subject to the assembly of the brethren. If the territory placed under his episcopate was too extensive to admit of his discharging all the duties of a bishop in every part of it, presbyters were appointed in certain stations, to act as his deputies in things of minor importance. These were called *chorepiscopi*, or *country bishops*, because in the country they represented the bishop.

III. But with respect to the office of which we are now treating, the bishops and presbyters were equally required to employ themselves in the dispensation of the word and sacraments. For at Alexandria only, because Arius had disturbed the Church there, it was ordained that no presbyter should preach to the people ; as is asserted by Socrates in the ninth book of his Tripartite History, with which Jerome hesitates not to express his dissatisfaction. It would certainly have been regarded as a prodigy, if any man had claimed the character of a bishop, who had not shewn himself really such in his conduct. Such was the strictness of those times, that all ministers were constrained to discharge the duties which the Lord requires of them. I refer not to the custom of one age only ; for even in the time of Gregory, when the Church was almost extinct, or at least had considerably degenerated from its ancient purity, it would not have been permitted for any bishop to abstain from preaching. Gregory somewhere says ; “ A priest dies, if his sound be not heard ; (d) for he provokes the wrath of the invisible Judge against him, if he go without the sound of preaching.”

(c) Titus i. 9.

(d) Exod. xxxviii. 35.

And in another place, “ When Paul declares that he is ‘ pure from the blood of all,’ (e) by this declaration, we, who are called priests, are convicted, confounded, and declared to be guilty, who to all our own crimes add the deaths of others; for we are chargeable with slaying all those who are daily beheld advancing to death, while we are indifferent and silent.” He calls himself and others silent, because they were less assiduous in their work than they ought to be. Since he spares not those who performed half of their duty, what is it probable he would have done, if any one had neglected it altogether? It was therefore long maintained in the Church, that the principal office of a bishop was to feed the people with the word of God, or to edify the Church both in public and private with sound doctrine.

IV. The establishment of one archbishop over all the bishops of each province, and the appointment of patriarchs at the Council of Nice, with rank and dignity superior to the archbishops, were regulations for the preservation of discipline. In this disquisition, however, what was of the least frequent use cannot be wholly omitted. The principal reason therefore for the institution of these orders was, that if any thing should take place in any Church which could not be settled by a few persons, it might be referred to a provincial synod. If the magnitude or difficulty of the case required a farther discussion, the patriarchs were called to unite with the synods, and from them there could be no appeal but to a general council. This constitution of government some called a hierarchy, a name, in my opinion, improper, and certainly not used in the Scriptures. For it has been the design of the Holy Spirit, in every thing relating to the government of the Church, to guard against any dreams of principality or dominion. But if we look at the *thing*, without regarding the *term*, we shall find that the ancient bishops had no intention of contriving a form of government for the Church, different from that which God hath prescribed in his word.

V. Nor was the situation of deacons at that time at all

(e) Acts xx. 26.



different from what it had been under the apostles. For they received the daily contributions of the faithful, and the annual revenues of the Church, to apply them to their proper uses, that is, to distribute part to the ministers, and part for the support of the poor; subject, however, to the authority of the bishop, to whom they also rendered an account of their administration every year. For when the canons invariably represent the bishop as the dispenser of all the benefactions of the Church, it is not to be understood as if he executed that charge himself, but because it belonged to him to give directions to the deacon, who were to be entirely supported from the funds of the Church, to whom the remainder was to be distributed, and in what proportion to each person; and because he had the superintendence over the deacon, to examine whether he faithfully discharged his office. Thus the canons, ascribed to the apostles, contain the following injunction: "We ordain that the bishop do have the property of the Church in his own power. For if the souls of men, which are of superior value, have been entrusted to him; there is far greater propriety in his taking charge of the pecuniary concerns; so that all things may be distributed to the poor by his authority through the presbyters and deacons, and that they may be administered with reverence, and all concern." And in the Council of Antioch it was decreed, that those bishops should be censured, who managed the pecuniary concerns of the Church without the concurrence of the presbyters and deacons. But it is unnecessary to argue this point any farther, since it is evident from many epistles of Gregory, that even in his time, when the administration of the Church was in other respects become very corrupt, yet this custom was still retained, that the deacons were the stewards for the relief of the poor, under the authority of the bishop. It is probable, that subdeacons were at first attached to the deacons to assist them in transacting the business of the poor; but this distinction was soon lost. Archdeacons were first erected when the extent of the property required a new and more accurate mode of administration; though Jerome states that there were such offices even in his time. In their hands was placed the

amount of the annual revenues, of the possessions and of the household furniture, and the collection of the daily contributions. Whence Gregory denounces to the archdeacon of Thessalonica, that he would be held guilty, if any of the property of the Church should be lost by him, either through negligence or fraud. Their appointment to read the gospel, and to exhort the people to pray, and their admission to the administration of the cup in the sacred supper, were intended to dignify their office, that they might discharge it with the more piety, in consequence of being admonished by such ceremonies, that they were not executing some profane stewardship, but that their function was spiritual and dedicated to God.

VI. Hence it is easy to judge what use was made of the property of the Church, and in what manner it was dispensed. We often find it stated, both in the decrees of the councils, and by the ancient writers, that whatever the Church possessed, whether in lands or in money, was the patrimony of the poor. The bishops and deacons, therefore, are continually reminded that they are not managing their own treasures, but those destined to supply the necessity of the poor, which if they unfaithfully withhold or embezzle, they will be guilty of murder. Hence they are admonished to distribute this property to the parties entitled to it, with the greatest caution and reverence, as in the sight of God, and without respect of persons. Hence also the solemn protestations of Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, and other bishops, assuring the people of their integrity. Now since it is perfectly equitable, and sanctioned by the law of the Lord, that those who are employed in the service of the Church should be maintained at the public expense of the Church; and even in that age some presbyters consecrated their patrimonies to God, and reduced themselves to voluntary poverty; the distribution was such, that neither were the ministers left without support, nor were the poor neglected. Yet, at the same time, care was taken that the ministers themselves, who ought to set an example of frugality to others, should not have enough to be abused to the purposes of splendour or delicacy, but only what would suffice to supply their ne-

cessities. "For," says Jerome, "those of the clergy who are able to maintain themselves from their own patrimony, if they take what belongs to the poor, are guilty of sacrilege, and by such an abuse, they eat and drink judgment to themselves."

VII. At first the administration was free and voluntary, the bishops and deacons acting with spontaneous fidelity, and integrity of conscience and innocence of life supplying the place of laws. Afterwards, when the cupidity or corrupt dispositions of some gave birth to evil examples, in order to correct these abuses, canons were made, which divided the revenues of the Church into four parts, assigning the first to the clergy, the second to the poor, the third to the reparation of churches and other buildings, the fourth to poor strangers. For, though other canons assign this last part to the bishop, this forms no variation from the division which I have mentioned. For the intention was, that it should be appropriated to him, neither for his own exclusive consumption, nor for lavish or arbitrary distribution, but to enable him to support the hospitality which Paul requires of persons in that office. (f) And so it is explained by Gelasius and Gregory. For Gelasius adduces no other reason why the bishop should claim any thing for himself, than to enable him to communicate to captives and strangers. And Gregory is still more explicit. He says, "It is the custom of the apostolic see, at the ordination of a bishop, to command him that all the revenue received by him, be divided into four portions; namely, one for the bishop and his family, for the support of hospitality and entertainment; the second for the clergy; the third for the poor; the fourth for the reparation of churches." It was unlawful for the bishop, therefore, to take for his own use any thing more than was sufficient for moderate and frugal sustenance and clothing. If any one began to transgress the due limits, either in luxury, or in ostentation and pomp, he was immediately admonished by his colleagues; and if he would not comply with the admonition, he was deposed from his office.

(f) 1 Tim. iii. 23.



VIII. The portion which they applied to ornament the sacred edifices, at first was very small, and even after the Church was become a little more wealthy, they did not exceed moderation in this respect; whatever money was so employed, still continued to be held in reserve for the poor, if any pressing necessity should occur. Thus, when famine prevailed in the province of Jerusalem, and there was no other way of relieving their wants, Cyril sold the vessels and vestments, and expended the produce in purchasing sustenance for the poor. In like manner, when vast numbers of the Persians were almost perishing with hunger, Acatius, bishop of Amida, after having convoked his clergy, and made that celebrated speech, "Our God has no need of dishes or cups, because he neither eats or drinks," melted down the vessels, and converted them into money, to redeem the wretched, and buy food for them. Jerome also, while he inveighs against the excessive splendour of the temples, makes honourable mention of Exuperius, at that time bishop of Thoulouse, who administered the emblem of our Lord's body in a wicker basket, and the emblem of his blood in a glass, but suffered no poor person to endure hunger. The same that I have just said of Acatius, Ambrose relates of himself; for when he was censured by the Arians for having broken up the sacred vessels to pay the ransom of some captives, he made the following most excellent defence: "He who sent forth the apostles without gold, gathered Churches together likewise without gold. The Church has gold, not to keep, but to expend, and to furnish relief in necessities. What need is there to keep that which is of no service? Do not we know how much gold and silver the Assyrians plundered from the temple of the Lord? Is it not better that it should be melted down by the priest for the sustenance of the poor, if other resources are wanting, than that it should be carried away by a sacrilegious enemy? Will not the Lord say, Wherefore hast thou suffered so many poor to die with hunger, and at the same time hadst gold with which thou mightest have supplied them with food? Why have so many been carried away into captivity, and never been redeemed? Why have so many been slain by the enemy? It would have been better to preserve the vessels of

living beings, than those of metals. To these questions you could make no answer. For what would you say? I was afraid that the temple of God would be destitute of ornament. God would reply, The sacraments require no gold, nor is gold any recommendation of that which is not purchased with gold. The ornament of the sacraments is the redemption of captives." In short, we see that it was very true which was observed by the same writer in another place, "that whatever the Church possessed at that time, was appropriated to the relief of the necessitous," and, "that all that a bishop had, belonged to the poor."

IX. These which we have enumerated, were the offices of the ancient Church. Others which are mentioned by ecclesiastical historians, were rather exercises and preparations, than certain offices. For to form a seminary, which should provide the Church with future ministers, those holy men took under their charge, protection, and discipline, such youths as, with the consent and sanction of their parents, enlisted themselves in the spiritual warfare; and so they educated them from an early age, that they might not enter on the discharge of their office ignorant and unprepared. All who were trained in this manner, were called by the general name of *clergy*. I could wish, indeed, that some other more appropriate name had been given them; for this appellation originated in error, or at least in some improper views: for Peter calls the whole Church *the clergy*, that is, *the inheritance of the Lord*. (g) The institution itself, however, was pious and eminently beneficial; that those who wished to consecrate themselves and their labours to the Church, should be educated under the care of the bishop, that no one might minister in the Church, but one who had received sufficient previous instruction, who from his early youth had imbibed sound doctrine, who from a strict discipline had acquired a certain habitual gravity, and more than common sanctity of life, who had been abstracted from secular occupations, and accustomed to spiritual cares and studies. Now as young soldiers, by counterfeit battles are trained to real and serious warfare; so the clergy were prepared by certain proba-

(g) 1 Peter v. 3.

tionary exercises, before they were actually promoted to offices. At first they were charged with the care of opening and shutting the temples, and they were called *ostiarii*, or *door-keepers*. Afterwards they were called *acoluti*, or *followers*, waiting upon the bishop in domestic services, and accompanying him on all occasions, at first in a way of honour, and afterwards to prevent all suspicion; moreover, that by degrees they might become known to the people, and might acquire some consideration among them, and at the same time that they might learn to bear the presence of all, and have courage to speak before them, that after being made presbyters, when they should come to preach, they might not be confounded with shame, therefore they were appointed to read the scriptures from the pulpit. In this manner they were promoted by degrees, that they might approve their diligence in the respective exercises, till they were made subdeacons. I only contend, that these were rather preparations for pupils, than functions reckoned among the real offices of the Church.

X. We have said, that the first point in the election of ministers related to the qualifications of the persons to be chosen, and the second to the religious reverence with which the business ought to be conducted. In both these points, the ancient Church followed the direction of Paul and the examples of the apostles. For it was their custom to assemble for the election of pastors with the greatest reverence and solemn invocation of the name of God. They had likewise a form of examination, in which they tried the life and doctrine of the candidates by that standard of Paul. Only they ran into the error of immoderate severity, from a wish to require in a bishop more than Paul requires, and especially, in process of time, by enjoining celibacy. In other things their practice was in conformity with the description of Paul. (*h*) In the third point which we have mentioned, namely, by whom ministers ought to be chosen, they did not always observe the same order. In the primitive times, there was no one admitted among the number of the clergy, without the consent of all the people; so that Cyprian makes a laboured

(*h*) 1 Tim. iii. 2—7.



defence of his having appointed one Aurelius a reader, without consulting the Church, because he departed in this instance from the general custom, though not without reason. He begins in the following manner: "In appointing the clergy, my very dear brethren, we are accustomed first to consult you, and to weigh the morals and merits of every one of them in the general assembly." But as there was not much danger in these inferior exercises, because they were admitted to a long probation and not to a high office, the consent of the people ceased to be asked. Afterwards, in the other offices also, except the episcopate, the people generally left the judgment and choice to the bishop and presbyters, so that they determined who were capable and deserving; except when new presbyters were appointed to the parishes, for then it was necessary to have the express consent of the body of the people at each place. Nor is it any wonder that the people were not very solicitous for the preservation of their right in this case. For no one was made a subdeacon, who had not been tried for a considerable time as one of the *clergy*, under the severe discipline which was then practised. After he had been tried in that station, he was constituted a deacon; in which if he conducted himself with fidelity, he obtained the rank of a presbyter. Thus no one was promoted who had not really undergone an examination for many years, under the eyes of the people. And there were many canons for the punishment of their faults; so that the Church could not be troubled with wicked presbyters or deacons, unless it neglected the remedies within its reach. The election of presbyters, however, always required the consent of the inhabitants of the place; which is testified by the first canon, which is attributed to Anacletus. And all ordinations took place at stated times of the year, that no one might be introduced clandestinely, without the consent of the faithful, or be promoted with too much facility without any attestation to his character.

XI. The right of voting in the election of bishops, was retained by the people for a long time, that no one might be obtruded who was not acceptable to all. The council of Antioch therefore decreed, that no bishop should be ap-

pointed without the consent of the people, which Leo the first expressly confirms. Hence the following injunctions: "Let him be chosen who shall be called for by the clergy and people, or at least by the majority of them." Again, "Let him who is to preside over all, be chosen by all." For he who is appointed without having been previously known and examined, must of necessity be intruded by force. Again, "Let him be elected who shall have been chosen by the clergy and desired by the people; and let him be consecrated by the bishops of that province, with the authority of the metropolitan. So careful were the holy fathers that this liberty of the people should not by any means be infringed, that when the general council assembled at Constantinople appointed Nectarius, they would not do it without the approbation of all the clergy and people; as is evident from their epistle to the council of Rome. Wherefore when any bishop appointed his successor, the appointment was not confirmed but by the suffrages of all the people. Of such a circumstance we have not only an example, but the particular form in Augustine's nomination of Eradius. And Theodoret, when he states that Peter was nominated by Athanasius, as his successor, immediately adds, that this was confirmed by the clergy, and ratified by the acclamations of the magistracy, the nobility, and all the people.

XII. I confess that there was the greatest propriety in the decree of the council of Laodicea, that the election should not be left to the populace. For it scarcely ever happens that so many heads concur in one opinion for the settlement of any business; and almost every case verifies the observation, that the uncertain vulgar are divided by contrary inclinations. But to this danger was applied an excellent remedy. For in the first place, the clergy alone made their choice, and presented the person they had chosen to the magistracy, or to the senate and governors. They deliberated on the election, and if it appeared to them a proper one, confirmed it, or otherwise chose another person whom they preferred.—Then the business was referred to the multitude, who, though they were not bound to concur in these previous opinions, yet were less likely to be thrown into disorder.—

Or if the business commenced with the multitude, this method was adopted in order to discover who was the principal object of their wishes; and after hearing the wishes of the people, the clergy proceeded to the election. Thus the clergy were neither at liberty to elect whom they pleased, nor under a necessity of complying with the foolish desires of the people. This order is stated by Leo in another place, when he says, "It is requisite to have the votes of the citizens, the testimonies of the people, the authority of the governors, and the election of the clergy." Again, "Let there be the testimony of the governors, the subscription of the clergy, the consent of the senate and people. Reason permits it not to be done in any other way." Nor is there any other meaning in that decree of the council of Laodicea, than that the clergy and governors should not suffer themselves to be carried away by the inconsiderate multitude, but by their prudence and gravity should check, on every necessary occasion, the folly and violence of popular desires.

XIII. This mode of election was still practised in the time of Gregory, and it is probable that it continued long after. There are many of his epistles which furnish sufficient evidence of this fact. For in every case relating to the creation of a new bishop in any place, he was accustomed to write to the clergy, the senate, and the people; and sometimes to the duke, according to the constitution of the government in the place to which he was writing. And if, on account of disturbances or dissensions in any Church, he confides the superintendence of the election to some neighbouring bishop, yet he invariably requires a solemn decree confirmed by the subscriptions of all. Even when one Constantius was created bishop of Milan, and on account of the incursions of the barbarians many of the Milanese had retired to Genoa, he thought the election would not be legitimate, unless they also were called together and gave their united consent. And what is more, it was within the last five hundred years that Pope Nicholas made this decree respecting the election of the Roman Pontiff; that the cardinals should take the lead, that in the next place they should unite with them the rest of the clergy, and lastly that the election should be confirmed by the consent of



the people. And at the conclusion he recites that decree of Leo, which I have just quoted, and commands it to be observed in future. If the cabals of the wicked should go to such a length as to constrain the clergy to quit the city in order to make a proper election, still he ordains that some of the people should be present at the same time. The consent of the emperor, as far as I can discover, was required only in two Churches, at Rome and at Constantinople, because they were the two capitals of the empire. For when Ambrose was sent to Milan with authority from Valentinian to preside at the election of a new bishop, that was an extraordinary measure, in consequence of the grievous factions which raged among the citizens. At Rome the authority of the emperor had anciently so much influence in the creation of a bishop, that Gregory speaks of himself as having been appointed to the government of the Church by the sole command of the emperor, notwithstanding he had been formally chosen by the people. But the custom was, that when any one had been chosen by the senate, clergy, and people, it was immediately reported to the emperor, that he might either ratify the election by his approbation, or rescind it by his negative. Nor is there any thing repugnant to this custom in the decrees collected by Gratian; which only say, that it is by no means to be suffered that a king should supersede all canonical election by appointing a bishop at his own pleasure, and that the metropolitans ought not to consecrate any one who shall thus have been promoted by the violence of power. For it is one thing, to spoil the Church of its right by transferring the whole to the caprice of an individual; and another, to give a king or an emperor the honour of confirming a legitimate election by his authority.

XIV. It remains for us to state, by what ceremony the ministers of the ancient Church, after their election, were initiated into their office. This the Latins have called *ordination*, or *consecration*. The Greeks have called it *χειροτονία*, *extension* or *elevation of hands*, and sometimes *χειροθεσία*, *imposition of hands*; though the former word properly signifies that kind of election in which the suffrages are declared by the lifting up of the hands. There is a decree of the council of Nice, that the metropolitan should meet

with all the bishops of the province to ordain him who shall have been elected; but that if any of them be prevented by the length of the journey, by sickness, or by any other necessary cause, at least three should meet, and those who are absent should testify their consent by letters. And when this canon from disuse had grown obsolete, it was renewed in various councils. Now the reason why all, or at least as many as had no sufficient excuse, were commanded to be present, was that there might be a more solemn examination into the learning and morals of the person to be ordained; for the business was not completed without examination. And it appears from the epistles of Cyprian, that in the beginning the bishops were not invited after the election, but used to be present at the election, and that for the purpose of acting as moderators, that nothing turbulent might take place among the multitude. For after having said that the people have the power either to choose the worthy for priests, or to reject the unworthy; he adds, "Wherefore it is to be carefully held and observed as a divine and apostolical tradition (which is observed among us, and in almost all the provinces) that for the due performance of ordinations, all the neighbouring bishops of the same province should meet with the people over whom a bishop is to be ordained, and that the bishop should be chosen in the presence of the people." But because such an assembly was sometimes very slowly collected, and there was danger that such a delay might be abused by some for the purposes of intrigue, it was deemed sufficient, if they assembled after the election was made, and upon due examination consecrated the person who had been chosen.

XV. This was the universal practice without any exception. By degrees a different custom was introduced, and the persons elected went to the metropolitan city to seek ordination. This change arose from ambition and a corruption of the ancient institution, rather than from any good reason. And not long after, when the authority of the see of Rome had increased, another custom obtained, which was still worse; almost all the bishops of Italy went to Rome to be consecrated. This may be seen by the epistles of Gregory.

Only a few cities, which did not so easily yield, preserved their ancient right; of which there is an example recorded by him in the case of Milan. Perhaps the metropolitan cities were the only ones that retained their privilege. For almost all the provincial bishops used to assemble in the metropolitan city to consecrate their archbishop. The ceremony was imposition of hands. For I read of no other ceremony practised, except that in the public assembly the bishops had some dress to distinguish them from the rest of the presbyters. Presbyters and deacons also were ordained solely by imposition of hands. But every bishop ordained his own presbyters, in conjunction with the assembly of the other presbyters of his diocese. Now though they all united in the same act, yet because the bishop took the lead, and the ceremony was performed under his direction, therefore, it was called his ordination. Wherefore it is often remarked by the ancient writers, that a presbyter differs from a bishop in no other respect, than that he does not possess the power of ordination.

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## CHAPTER V.

*The ancient Form of Government entirely subverted by the Papal Tyranny.*

**N**OW it is proper to exhibit the system of ecclesiastical government at present maintained by the see of Rome, and all its dependencies, with a full view of that hierarchy which is perpetually in their mouths, and to compare it with the description we have given of the primitive and ancient Church. This comparison will shew what kind of a Church there is among those who arrogate this exclusive title, and try to oppress, or rather to overwhelm us, with their fury. Now it is best to begin with the vocation, that we may see who and what kind of men are called to the ministry, and how they are introduced to it. We shall then consider how faithfully they discharge their duty. We shall give the first

*Calvin says, this was done by the Council of Nicaea, and the Council of Chalcedon.*



place to the bishops; who I wish could have the honour of retaining the first rank in this disquisition. But the subject itself will not permit me to touch on this argument ever so slightly, without involving their deepest disgrace. I shall remember, however, the nature of the work in which I am now engaged, and shall not suffer my discourse, which ought to be confined to simple doctrine, to exceed its proper bounds. But let some one of those who have not lost all shame, answer me; What kind of bishops are now generally chosen? To examine into their learning, is too obsolete; and if any regard be paid to it, they choose some lawyer, who understands pleading in a court better than preaching in a Church. It is evident, that for a hundred years, scarcely one in a hundred that has been chosen, had any knowledge of the Holy Scripture. I say nothing of the preceding ages; not that they were much better, but because our business is only with the present Church. If we inquire into their morals, we shall find that there have been few or none, who would not have been judged unworthy by the ancient canons. He who has not been a drunkard, has been a fornicator; and he who has been free from both these vices, has been either a gambler or a hunter, or dissolute in some part of his life. For the old canons exclude a man from the episcopal office, for smaller vices than these. But the greatest absurdity of all is, that even boys, scarcely ten years of age, have by the permission of the Pope been made bishops. And to such lengths of impudence and stupidity have they proceeded, as not to be afraid of that extreme and monstrous enormity, which is altogether repugnant to the common sense of nature. Hence it appears how solemn and conscientious must have been their elections, which were marked with such extreme negligence.

II. All the right of the people to choose has been entirely taken away. Their suffrages, assent, subscriptions, and every thing of this kind, have disappeared. All the power is transferred to the canons. They confer the bishopric on whom they please, and then produce him before the people, but to be adored, not to be examined. Leo, on the contrary, exclaims that no reason permits this, and pronounces

*Calvin does not object to giving private and over the election as certain solidly will most have and*

it to be a violent imposition. When Cyprian declares it to be of divine right, that an election should not be made without the consent of the people, he shews that a different method is repugnant to the word of God. The decrees of various councils most severely prohibit it to be done in any other way, and if it be done, command it to be void. If these things be true, there is now no canonical election remaining in all the Papacy, either according to divine or ecclesiastical right. Now though there were no other evil, how will they be able to excuse themselves for having thus deprived the Church of her right? But they say, the corruption of the times required, that as the people and magistrates, in the choice of bishops, were rather carried away by antipathies and partialities than governed by an honest and correct judgment, the decision of this business should be entrusted to a few. Let it be admitted that this was an extreme remedy for a disease under desperate circumstances. Yet as the medicine has been found more injurious than the disease itself, why is there no remedy provided against this new malady? They reply, the canons themselves have particularly directed what course they ought to pursue in an election.—But do we doubt, that the people formerly understood themselves to be bound by the most sacred laws, when they saw the word of God proposed as their rule, whenever they assembled for the election of a bishop? For that one declaration of God, in which he describes the true character of a bishop, ought to have more weight than millions of canons. Yet corrupted by a most sinful disposition, they paid no regard to law or equity. So in the present day, though there are the best written laws, yet they remain buried in paper. At the same time, it has been the general practice, and as if it were founded in reason, has obtained the general approbation, that drunkards, fornicators, and gamblers, have been promoted to this honour. I do not say enough. Bishoprics are the rewards of adulterers and panders. For when they are given to hunters and fowlers, the business must be considered as well managed. To attempt any excuse of such flagitious proceedings is abominable. The people, I say, had a most excellent canon, in the direction of the word of

God, that "a bishop must be blameless, apt to teach, no striker," &c. (i) Why then was the right of election transferred from the people to the canons? They reply, because the word of God was not attended to, amidst the tumults and factions of the people. And why should it not now be again tranferred from them, who not only violate all laws, but casting off all shame, mingle and confound heaven and earth together, by their lust, avarice, and ambition?

III. But it is a false pretence when they say, that the present practice was introduced as a remedy. We read that in the early times, cities were frequently thrown into confusion at the election of their bishops; yet no one ever dared to think of depriving the citizens of their right. For they had other ways, either of guarding against these evils, or of correcting them when they occurred. But I will state the real truth of the case. When the people began to be negligent about choosing, and considering this care as less suitable to themselves, left it to the presbyters, the latter abused this occasion to usurp a tyrannical power which they afterwards confirmed to themselves by new canons. Their form of ordination is no other than a mere mockery. For the appearance of examination which they display in it, is so frivolous and jejune, that it is even destitute of all plausibility. The power of nominating bishops, therefore, which some princes have obtained by stipulation with the Roman Pontiff, has caused no new injury to the Church, because the election has only been taken from the canons, who had seized or rather stolen it without any just claim. It is certainly a most disgraceful example, that courtiers are made bishops, and sent from the court to seize upon the Churches; and it ought to be the concern of all pious princes, to refrain from such an abuse. For it is an impious robbery of the Church, whenever a bishop is imposed upon any people, who have not desired, or at least freely approved of him. But the disorderly custom which has long prevailed in the Churches, has given occasion to princes to assume the presentation of bishops to themselves. For they would rather have this at their own

(i) 1 Tim. iii. 2—7.



disposal, than in the hands of those who had no more right to it, and by whom it was not less abused.

IV. This is the goodly calling, in consequence of which bishops boast of being successors of the apostles. The power of creating presbyters, they say, belongs exclusively to them. But this is a gross corruption of the ancient institution; for by their ordination they create, not presbyters to rule and feed the people, but priests to offer sacrifice. So when they consecrate deacons, they have nothing to do with their true and proper office, but only ordain them to certain ceremonies about the chalice and patine. In the council of Chalcedon, on the contrary, it was decreed, that there should be no absolute ordinations, that is, without some place being at the same time assigned to the persons ordained where they were to exercise their office. This decree was highly useful for two reasons: first, that the Churches might not be burdened with an unnecessary charge, and the money which ought to be distributed to the poor, consumed upon idle men: secondly, that the persons ordained might consider themselves not as promoted to an honour, but as intrusted with an office to the discharge of which they were bound by a solemn engagement. But the Romish doctors, who think their belly ought to be all their care, even in matters of religion, first explain the requisite title to consist in an income sufficient for their support, whether arising from their own patrimony or from a benefice. Therefore when they ordain a deacon or a presbyter, without giving themselves any concern where he is to officiate, they readily admit him, if he be only rich enough to maintain himself. But who can admit this, that the title which the decree of the council requires is a competent annual income? And because the more recent canons condemned the bishops to maintain those whom they had ordained without a sufficient title, in order to prevent their too great facility in the admission of candidates, they have even contrived a way to evade this penalty. For the person ordained mentions any title whatever, and promises that he will be content with it. By this engagement they are debarred from an action for maintenance. I say nothing of a thousand frauds practised in this business; as when some

falsely exhibit empty titles of benefices, from which they could not derive five farthings a year; others under a secret stipulation borrow benefices which they promise to return immediately, but which, in many instances, are never returned; and other similar mysteries.

V. But even though these grosser abuses were removed, is it not always absurd, to ordain a presbyter without assigning him any station? For they ordain no one but to offer sacrifice. Now the legitimate ordination of a presbyter consists in a call to the government of the Church, and that of a deacon to the collection of the alms. They adorn their procedure, indeed, with many pompous ceremonies, that its appearance may gain the veneration of the simple; but with judicious persons, what can be gained by those appearances unaccompanied by any solidity or truth? For they use ceremonies either derived from Judaism, or invented among themselves, from which it would be better to refrain. But as to any real examination, the consent of the people, and other necessary things, they are not mentioned. The shadow they retain of these things, I consider not worthy of notice. By shadow, I mean, those ridiculous gesticulations, used as a dull and foolish imitation of antiquity. The bishops have their vicars, who before an ordination inquire into the learning of the candidates. But in what manner? They interrogate them, whether they can read their masses; whether they know how to decline some common noun that may occur in reading, or to conjugate a verb, or to tell the meaning of a word? for it is not necessary for them to know how to give the sense of a verse. And yet none are rejected from the priesthood, who are deficient even in these puerile elements, provided they bring some present or recommendation to favour. In the same spirit it is, that when the persons to be ordained present themselves at the altar, some one inquires three times, in a language not understood, whether they are worthy of that honour? One (who never saw them before, but that no part of the process might be wanting, acts his part in the farce) answers, They are worthy. What accusation is there against these venerable fathers, but that by sporting with such manifest sacrileges they are guilty of unblushing mockery of God

and men? But because they have been long in possession of it, they suppose it is now become right. For whoever ventures to open his mouth against these glaring and atrocious enormities, they hurry him away to execution, as if he had committed a capital crime. Would they do this if they believed that there was any God?

VI. Now how much better do they conduct themselves in the collation of benefices, a thing formerly connected with ordination, but now entirely separated from it? The ways in which this business is managed, are various. For the bishops are not the only persons who confer benefices, and in those the collation of which is ascribed to them, they do not always possess the full power, but while they retain the name of the collation for the sake of honour, the presentation belongs to others. Beside these, there are nominations from the colleges, resignations either absolute or made for the sake of exchange, commendatory rescripts, preventions, and the like. But they all conduct themselves in such a manner, that no one can reproach another for any thing. I maintain, that scarcely one benefice in a hundred, in all the papacy, is at present conferred without simony, according to the definition which the ancients gave of that crime. I do not say that they all purchase with ready money; but shew me one in twenty who obtains a benefice without any indirect recommendation. Some are promoted by relationship, others by alliance, others by the influence of parents, others gain favour by their services. In short, the end for which sacerdotal offices are conferred, is not to provide for the Churches, but for the persons to whom they are given. And therefore they call them *benefices*, a name by which they sufficiently declare, that they view them in no other light than as donatives of princes, by which they either conciliate the favour of their soldiers, or reward their services. I forbear to remark that these rewards are conferred upon barbers, cooks, muleteers, and other dregs of the people. And, in the present day, scarcely any litigations make more noise in the courts of justice than those respecting benefices, so that they may be considered as a mere prey thrown out for dogs to hunt after. Is it tolerable, even to hear the name of



*pastors* given to men, who have forced themselves into the possession of a Church, as into an enemy's farm; who have obtained it by a legal process; who have purchased it with money; who have gained it by dishonourable services; who, while infants just beginning to lisp, succeeded to it as an inheritance transmitted by their uncles and cousins, and sometimes even by fathers to their illegitimate children?

VII. Would the licentiousness of the people, however corrupt and lawless, ever have proceeded to such a length? But it is still more monstrous that one man, I say nothing of his qualifications, only a man not capable of governing himself, should preside over the government of five or six Churches. We may now see, in the courts of princes, young men who hold one archbishopric, two bishoprics, and three abbies. It is a common thing for canons to be loaded with five, six, or seven benefices, of which they take not the least care, except in receiving the revenues. I will not object, that this is every where condemned by the word of God, which has long ceased to have the least weight with them. I will not object, that various councils have made many very severe decrees against such disorder; for these also, whenever they please, they fearlessly treat with contempt. But I maintain, that both these things are execrable enormities, utterly repugnant to God, to nature, and to the government of the Church; that one robber should engross several Churches at once; and that the name of *pastor* should be given to one who could not be present with his flock, even if he would; and yet, such is their impudence, they cover these abominable impurities with the name of the Church, in order to exempt them from all censure. And, moreover, that inviolable succession, to the merit of which they boast that the Church owes its perpetual preservation, is included in these iniquities.

VIII. Now let us see how faithfully they exercise their office, which is the second mark by which we are to judge of a legitimate pastor. Of the priests whom they create, some are *monks*, others are called *seculars*. The former of these classes was unknown to the ancient Church, and to hold such a place in the Church was so incompatible with the monastic

*Catholics - had few educational qualifications*

profession, that anciently when any one was chosen from a monastery to be one of the clergy, he ceased to be a monk. And even Gregory, in whose time there was much corruption, yet suffered not this confusion to take place. For he enjoined, that they who became abbots, should be divested of their clerical character; for that no one could be a monk and a clergyman at the same time, because the one would be an impediment to the other. Now if I inquire how that man can duly discharge his office, whom the canons declare to be unfit for it, what answer will they make? I suppose they will cite those abortive decrees of Innocent and Boniface, by which monks are admitted to the honour and authority of the priesthood, so that they may still remain in their monasteries. But what reason is there, that any illiterate ass, as soon as he has once occupied the see of Rome, should by one diminutive word overturn all the usages of antiquity? But of this we shall say more hereafter. Suffice it at present to remark, that during the purer times of the Church, it was deemed a great absurdity for a monk to hold the office of a priest. For Jerome denies that he performed the office of a priest while he lived among the monks; but represents himself as one of the people who ought to be governed by the priests. But if we grant them this point, how do they execute their office? There are some of the mendicants, and a few of the others, who preach. All the rest of the monks either chant or mutter over masses in their cloisters, as if it were the design of Jesus Christ that presbyters should be appointed for this purpose, or as if the nature of their office admitted of it. While the scripture clearly testifies that it is the duty of a presbyter to govern his own Church, (k) is it not an impious profanation to transfer to another object, or rather to make a total change in God's sacred institution? For when they are ordained monks, they are expressly forbidden to do things which the Lord enjoins upon all presbyters. This direction is given to them; Let a monk be content in his cloister, and not presume to administer the sacraments, or to execute any other branch of

(k) Acts xx, 28.

public duty. Let them deny, if they can, that it is a glaring mockery of God, to create a presbyter in order that he may refrain from discharging his true and genuine office, and to give a man the name, who cannot possess the thing.

IX. I proceed to the seculars; of whom some are called *beneficiaries*, that is, they have benefices by which they are maintained; others hire themselves to labour by the day, in saying mass or singing, and live on the wages which they gain from these employments. Benefices are either attended with cure of souls, as bishoprics and parishes; or they are the stipends of delicate men, who gain a livelihood by chanting, as prebends, canonries, dignities, chaplainships, and the like. But in the confusion which has been introduced, abbey and priories are conferred not only on secular priests, but also on boys, by privilege, that is, by common and ordinary custom. As to the mercenaries, who seek their daily sustenance, how could they act otherwise than they do, that is, to offer themselves to hire in a mean and shameful manner; especially among such a vast multitude as now swarms in the world? Therefore, when they are ashamed of open begging, or think they should gain but little by that practice, they run about like hungry dogs, and by their importunity, as by barking, extort from reluctant hands some morsels to put into their mouths. Here if I should endeavour to describe what a great disgrace it is to the Church, that the office and dignity of the presbytery has been so degraded, there would be no end. My readers, therefore, have no reason to expect from me a long discourse, corresponding to such a flagitious enormity. I only assert, in few words, that if it be the duty of a presbyter, as the word of God prescribes, and the ancient canons require, to feed the Church and administer the spiritual kingdom of Christ, (1) all those priests who have no work or wages, except in making merchandize of masses, not only fail of executing their office, but have no legitimate office to execute. For there is no place assigned to them to teach; they have no people to govern. In short, nothing remains to them but the altar upon which

(1) Cor. iv. 1.



to offer up Christ in sacrifice; and this is not sacrificing to God, but to demons, as we shall see in another place.

X. Here I touch not on the external vices, but only on the intestine evil which is deeply rooted in their institution, and cannot be separated from it. I shall add a remark, which will sound harshly in their ears, but because it is true, it must be expressed; that canons, deans, chaplains, provosts, and all who are supported by sinecures, are to be considered in the same light. For what service can they perform for the Church? They have discarded the preaching of the word, the superintendence of discipline, and the administration of the sacraments, as employments attended with too much labour and trouble. What have they remaining then, to boast of as true presbyters? They have chanting and the pomp of ceremonies. But what is all this to the purpose? If they plead custom, usage, prescription of long continuance, I will confront them with the decision of Christ, where he has given us a description of true presbyters, and what qualifications ought to be possessed by those who wish to be considered as such. If they cannot bear so hard a law as to submit themselves to the rule of Christ, let them at least allow this cause to be decided by the authority of the primitive Church. But their condition will not be at all better, if we judge of their state by the ancient canons. Those who have degenerated into canons, ought to be presbyters, as they were in former times, to govern the Church in common with the bishop, and to be his colleagues in the pastoral office. These *chapter dignities*, as they call them, have nothing to do with the government of the Church; much less have the chaplainships, and the other dregs of similar offices. In what estimation then shall we hold them all? It is certain that the word of Christ, and the practice of the ancient Church, agree in excluding them from the honour of the presbytery. They contend, however, that they are presbyters, but the mask must be torn off. Then we shall find, that their whole profession is most foreign and remote from the office of presbyters, which is described to us by the apostles, and which was required in the primitive Church. All such orders therefore, by whatever titles they

may be distinguished, since they are of modern invention, or at least are not supported by the institution of God, or the ancient usage of the Church, ought to have no place in a description of the spiritual government, which the Church has received, consecrated by the mouth of the Lord himself. Or if they wish me to use plainer language, since chaplains, canons, deans, provosts, and other idlers of this description, do not even with their little finger touch a particle of that duty which is necessarily required in presbyters, it is not to be endured that they should falsely usurp the honour, and thus violate the sacred institution of Jesus Christ.

XI. There remain the bishops and the rectors of parishes, who would afford me great pleasure if they exerted themselves to support their office. For we would readily admit to them, that they have a pious and honourable office, provided they discharged it. But when they wish to be considered as pastors, notwithstanding they desert the churches committed to them, and transfer the care of them to others, they act just as if the office of a pastor consisted in doing nothing. If a usurer who never stirred his foot out of the city, should profess himself a ploughman or vinedresser; if a soldier who had spent all his time in the camp and in the field of battle, and had never seen a court of justice or books, should offer himself as a lawyer, who could endure such gross absurdities? But these men act in a manner still more absurd, who wish to be accounted and called legitimate pastors of the Church, and yet are not willing to be so in reality. For how many of them are there, who execute the government of their Churches even in appearance? Many of them all their lifetime devour the revenues of Churches, which they never approach even to look at them. Others either go themselves, or send an agent once every year, that nothing may be lost by farming them out. When this abuse first intruded itself, they who wished to enjoy this kind of vacation from duty, exempted themselves by special privileges. Now, it is a rare case for any one to reside in his own Church; for they consider their Churches as no other than farms, over which they place their vicars, as bailiffs or

stewards. But it is repugnant to common sense, that a man should be pastor of a flock, who never saw one of the sheep.

XII. It appears that some seeds of this evil had sprung up in the time of Gregory, and that the rectors of Churches began to be negligent in preaching and teaching; for he heavily complains of it in the following passages. "The world is full of priests; but yet there are few labourers found in the harvest: because we undertake the sacerdotal office, but perform not the work of the office." Again, "Because they have no bowels of charity, they wish to be considered as lords; they do not acknowledge themselves to be fathers. They change the place of humility into an aggrandizement of dominion." Again, "But, O ye pastors, what are we doing, who receive the wages and are not labourers? We have fallen into extraneous employments; we undertake one thing, and perform another. We relinquish the office of preaching; and it is our misfortune, I conceive, that we are called bishops, since we hold a title of honour, but not of virtue." Since he uses such severity of language against those who were only chargeable with a want of sufficient assiduity, or diligence, in their office; what would he have said, if he had seen scarcely any, or very few of the bishops, and among the rest hardly one in a hundred, ascend a pulpit once in their lives? For things are come to such a pitch of frenzy, that it is generally esteemed beneath the dignity of a bishop, to deliver a sermon to a congregation. In the time of Bernard there had been some declension, but we see how sharply he reproves and inveighs against the whole body of the clergy, who, it is probable, however, were far less corrupt in that age than they are in the present.

XIII. Now if any one will closely observe and strictly examine this whole form of ecclesiastical government, which exists at the present day under the papacy, he will find it a nest of the most lawless and ferocious banditti in the world. Every thing in it is clearly so dissimilar and repugnant to the institution of Christ, so degenerated from the ancient regulations and usages of the Church, so at variance with



nature and reason, that no greater injury can be done to Christ, than by pleading his name in defence of such a disorderly government. We (they say) are the pillars of the Church, the prelates of religion, the vicars of Christ, the heads of the faithful, because we have succeeded to the power and authority of the apostles. They are perpetually vaunting of these fooleries, as if they were talking to blocks of wood; but whenever they repeat these boasts, I will ask them in return, what they have in common with the apostles? For the question is not respecting any hereditary honour, which may be given to men while they are asleep, but of the office of preaching, which they so carefully avoid. So when we assert that their kingdom is the tyranny of antichrist, they immediately reply, that it is that venerable hierarchy, which has been so often commended by great and holy men. As though the holy fathers, when they praised the ecclesiastical hierarchy, or spiritual government, as it had been delivered to them by the hands of the apostles, ever dreamed of this chaos of deformity and desolation, where the bishops for the most part are illiterate asses, unacquainted with the first and plainest rudiments of the faith, or, in some instances, are infants just come into the world; and if any be more learned, which, however, is a rare case, they consider a bishopric to be nothing but a title of splendour and magnificence; where the rectors of Churches think no more of feeding the flock, than a shoemaker does of ploughing; where all things are confounded with a dispersion worse than that of Babel, so there can no longer be seen any clear vestige of the administration practised in the time of the fathers.

XIV. What if we proceed to inquire into their manners? "Where is that light of the world," which Christ requires? where that "salt of the earth?" (*m*) where that sanctity, which might serve as a perpetual example to others? There is no class of men in the present day more infamous for profusion, delicacy, luxury, and profligacy of every kind;

(*m*) Matt. v. 13, 14.

no class of men contains more apt or expert masters of every species of imposture, fraud, treachery, and perfidy ; no where can be found equal cunning or audacity in the commission of crime. I say nothing of their pride, haughtiness, rapacity, and cruelty. I say nothing of the abandoned licentiousness of every part of their lives. Enormities which the world is so wearied with bearing, that there is no room for the least apprehension lest I should be charged with excessive exaggeration. One thing I assert, which it is not in their power to deny, that there is scarcely one of the bishops, and not one in a hundred of the parochial clergy, who, if sentence were to be passed upon his conduct according to the ancient canons, would not be excommunicated, or, at the very least, deposed from his office. That ancient discipline, which required a more accurate investigation to be made into the conduct of the clergy, has so long been obsolete, that I may be considered as making an incredible assertion ; but such is the fact. Now let all who fight under the standards and auspices of the Roman see, go and boast of their sacerdotal order. It is evident that the order which they have is not derived from Christ, from his apostles, from the fathers, or from the ancient Church.

XV. Now let the deacons come forward, with that most sacred distribution which they have of the property of the Church. They do not at present, however, create their deacons for any such purpose ; for they enjoin them nothing but to serve at the altar, to say or chant the gospel, and do I know not what trifles. Nothing of the alms, nothing of the care of the poor, nothing of the whole function which they executed in primitive times. I speak of the institution itself. For if we advert to the fact, it is now become no office at all, but only a step towards the priesthood. In one circumstance, those who act the part of a deacon at the mass, exhibit an useless and frivolous resemblance of antiquity, in receiving the offerings before the consecration. Now it was the ancient custom, that before the communion of the supper, the faithful kissed each other, and then offered their alms at the altar ; thus they expressed their charity, first by a sign, and then by active beneficence. The deacon, who was steward

for the poor, received what was given, in order to distribute it. Of the alms given at present, no more reaches the poor than if they were thrown into the sea. This false appearance of deaconship, therefore, is a mockery of the church. It contains nothing resembling the apostolic institution, or the ancient usage. Even the distribution of the property, they have turned into another channel; and have ordered it in such a way, that it is impossible to imagine any thing more disorderly. For as robbers, after having murdered some ill-fated travellers, divide the plunder among themselves, so these men, after having extinguished the light of God's word, and as it were cut the throat of the Church, have concluded, that whatever had been dedicated to sacred uses, was abandoned to plunder and rapine. They have therefore made a division of it, and every one has seized as large a share as he could.

XVI. Here all the ancient usages which we have described, have not only been disturbed, but entirely expunged and abolished. The principal part of this plunder was seized by the bishops and the presbyters of cities, who being enriched by it were converted into canons. That the partition was made in confusion is evident, from the contentions which prevail among them even to this day, about their respective limits. But, however it may be managed, they have taken care that not a penny of all the property of the Church should reach the poor, who were at least entitled to half of it. For the canons expressly allot them one fourth part, and assign another fourth part to the bishops, to be laid out in hospitality and other offices of charity. I say nothing of what the clergy ought to do with their portion, and to what use they ought to apply it. The residue, which is appropriated to the reparation of temples, edifices, and other expenses, it has been sufficiently shewn, ought to be at the service of the poor in time of necessity. If they had a single spark of the fear of God in their hearts, could they bear this reflection of conscience, that every thing they eat and drink, and wear, is the fruit of robbery and even of sacrilege? But though they are little affected with the judgment of God, they should at least consider that those, whom they wish to persuade into a belief of their possession of such an excellent



and well-regulated system in their Church as they are accustomed to boast, are men endued with sense and reason. Let them answer me in a word, whether deaconship be a licence for theft and robbery? If they deny this, they will also be obliged to confess, that they have no such office left; seeing that among them the whole administration of the revenues of the Church has been openly perverted into a system of sacrilegious depredation.

XVII. But here they advance a most plausible plea. They allege that the dignity of the Church is becomingly sustained by this magnificence. And such is the impudence of some of their faction, that they dare to boast in express terms, that this princely state of the priesthood constitutes the only fulfilment of those predictions in which the ancient prophets describe the splendour of the kingdom of Christ. It is not in vain, they say, that God has made the following promises to his Church; "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him." (n) "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem." (o) "All they from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee." (p) If I should dwell long on a refutation of this presumption, I fear I should expose myself to the charge of folly. Therefore I am not inclined to spend my words in vain. But I ask, if any Jew were to abuse these passages in the same manner, what reply would they make to him? There is no doubt but they would reprove his stupidity, in transferring to the flesh and the world things which are spiritually spoken of the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. For we know that, under the image of earthly things, the prophets have represented to us the heavenly glory of God, which ought to shine in the Church. For of those external blessings which their words express, the Church never had less abundance than in the days of the apostles, and yet it is acknowledged by all that the kingdom

(n) Psalm lxxii. 10, 11.

(o) Isaiah iii. 1.

(p) Isaiah lx. 6, 7.

of Christ then flourished in its greatest vigour. What then, it will be asked, is the meaning of these passages? I reply, that every thing precious, high, and excellent, ought to be in subjection to the Lord. In regard to the express declaration, that kings shall submit their sceptres to Christ, cast their crowns at his feet, and consecrate their wealth to the Church, when (they will say) was it more truly and fully exemplified, than when Theodosius, casting off the purple robes, and relinquishing the ensigns of imperial majesty, submitted himself, like one of the common people, to do solemn penance before God and the Church? than when he and other such pious princes devoted their cares and exertions to the preservation of pure doctrine in the Church, and to the support and protection of sound teachers? But how far the priests of that age were from rioting in superfluous riches, a single expression of the council of Aquileia, at which Ambrose presided, sufficiently declares. "Poverty is honourable in the priests of the Lord." It is true that the bishops at that time had some wealth, which they might have employed to display the honour of the Church, if they had considered them as the Church's real ornaments. But knowing that there was nothing more inconsistent with the office of pastors, than to display and to pride themselves on the luxury of their tables, the splendour of their apparel, a large retinue, and magnificent palaces, they followed and retained the humility and modesty, and even the poverty which Christ has consecrated in all his ministers.

XVIII. But not to dwell too long on this point, let us again collect into a brief summary, how very much the present dispensation, or rather dissipation, of the property of the Church, differs from that true office of deacons, which the word of God commends to us, and which the ancient Church observed. That portion which is employed in the ornaments of temples, I assert, is grossly misapplied, if it be not regulated by that moderation which the nature of sacred things requires, and which the apostles and holy fathers have prescribed both by precept and by examples. But what is there seen like this, in the temples at the present day? Whatever is conformable, I do not say to that primitive frugality, but to any

honourable mediocrity, is rejected. Nothing pleases, but what savours of the profusion and corruption of the present times. At the same time they are so far from feeling any just concern for the living temples, that they would suffer thousands of the poor to perish with hunger, rather than convert the smallest chalice or silver pitcher into money, to relieve their wants. And, not of myself to pronounce any thing more severe, I would only request my pious readers to indulge this one reflection. If it could happen that Exuperius, that bishop of Thoulouse whom we have mentioned, if Acatius, if Ambrose, or any other such, should be raised from the dead, what would they say? In such extreme necessity of the poor, they surely would not approve of the riches of the Church being applied to another use, and that an unnecessary one. I forbear to remark, that these purposes for which they are employed, even if there were no poor, are in many respects injurious, but of no utility whatever. But I will not appeal to the authority of men. The property has been dedicated to Christ, and therefore ought to be dispensed according to his will. It will be useless for them, to allege, that this portion has been employed for Christ, which they have squandered in a manner inconsistent with his command. To confess the truth, however, there is not much of the ordinary revenue of the Church lost in these expenses. For there are no bishoprics so opulent, no abbeyes so rich, in short no benefices so numerous, or ample, as to satisfy the voraciousness of the priests. Wishing to spare themselves, therefore, they induce the people, from superstitious motives, to take what ought to be bestowed upon the poor, and apply it to the building of temples, the erection of statues, the purchase of chalices and shrines for relics, and the provision of costly vestments. This is the gulf which swallows up all the daily alms.

XIX. Of the revenue which they derive from lands and possessions, what can I say more than I have already said, and which is evident to the observation of all men? We see with what fidelity the principal portion is disposed of by those who are called bishops and abbots. What folly is it to seek here for any ecclesiastical order? Was it reasonable that they,



whose life ought to be an eminent example of frugality, modesty, temperance, and humility, should emulate the pomp of princes, in the number of their attendants, the splendour of their palaces, the elegance of their apparel, and the luxury of their tables? And how very inconsistent it was with the office of those, whom the eternal and inviolable decree of God forbids to be greedy of filthy lucre, (*q*) and commands to be content with simple fare, not only to lay their hands upon towns and castles, but to seize on the largest provinces, and even to assume the reins of empire! If they despise the word of God, what reply will they make to those ancient decrees of councils, by which it is ordained that a bishop shall have a small house near the Church, a frugal table, and humble furniture? What will they say to that sentence of the council of Aquileia, which declares poverty to be honourable in the priests of the Lord? For the direction given by Jerome to Nepotian, that poor persons and strangers, and Christ among them, should be familiar guests at his table, they will perhaps reject as too austere. But they will be ashamed to contradict what he immediately subjoins; “that it is the glory of a bishop, to provide for the poor, and the disgrace of all priests, to seek to enrich themselves.” Yet they cannot receive this, but they must all condemn themselves to ignominy. But it is not necessary to pursue them with any farther severity at present, as it was only my intention to shew, that the legitimate office of deacon has long been entirely abolished among them, to prevent their continuing to pride themselves on this title, for the purpose of recommending their Church. And this design, I think, I have fully accomplished.

(*q*) Titus i. 7.

## CHAPTER VI.

*The Primacy of the Roman See.*

**H**ITHERTO we have treated of those ecclesiastical orders which existed in the government of the ancient Church, but which afterwards, in process of time being corrupted and gradually more and more perverted, now in the papal Church merely retain their names, while in reality they are nothing but masks. And this we have done, that by the comparison the pious reader might judge what sort of a Church the Romanists have, for the sake of which they represent us as guilty of schism, because we have separated from it. But the head and summit of the whole establishment, that is, the Primacy of the Roman see, by which they endeavour to prove that the Catholic Church is exclusively theirs, we have not yet touched on; because it originated, neither in the institution of Christ, nor in the usage of the ancient Church, as did the other offices, which we have shewn were handed down from antiquity, but since, through the corruption of the times, have degenerated and even assumed altogether a new form. And yet they endeavour to persuade the world, that the principal and almost only bond of the unity of the Church is adherence to the see of Rome, and perseverance in obedience to it. This is the foundation on which they principally rest, when they wish to deny us all claim to the Church, and to arrogate it to themselves; that they retain the head, on which the unity of the Church depends, and without which it must be torn asunder and crumble to pieces. For their notion is, that the Church is like a mutilated and headless body, unless it be subject to the Roman see as its head. Therefore when they dispute respecting their hierarchy, they always commence with this axiom, that the Roman pontiff, as the vicar of Christ who is head of the Church, presides over the universal Church in his stead, and that the Church cannot be well constituted, unless that see holds the primacy above all

others. Wherefore it is necessary to discuss this subject also, that nothing belonging to the good government of the Church may be omitted.

II. Let the question, therefore, be stated thus: Whether it be necessary to the true system of what they call the hierarchy or government of the Church, that one see should have the pre-eminence above all the rest in dignity and power, so as to be the head of the whole body? Now we subject the Church to very unreasonable laws, if we impose this necessity upon it without the word of God. Therefore, if our adversaries wish to gain their cause, it is necessary for them, in the first place, to shew, that this economy was instituted by Christ. For this purpose they allege the high-priesthood ordained in the law, and the supreme jurisdiction of the high-priest which God appointed at Jerusalem. But it is easy to give an answer to this, or indeed various answers, if they would not be satisfied with one. In the first place, there is no reason for extending to the whole world, what was useful in a single nation; on the contrary, the case of a single nation, and that of the whole world, are widely different. Because the Jews were surrounded on all sides with idolaters, God, in order to prevent their being distracted by a variety of religions, fixed the seat of his worship in the centre of the country, and there he set over them one principal priest, to whom they were all to be subject, for the better preservation of unity among them. Now, when the true religion has been diffused over the whole world, who does not perceive it to be utterly absurd to assign the government of the east and west to one man? It is just—if it were contended, that the whole world ought to be governed by one magistrate, because there is only one in a small district. But there is another reason why this ought not to be made a precedent for imitation. Every one knows that the Jewish high-priest was a type of Christ; now that the priesthood has been transferred, that right must also be transferred. To whom then is it transferred? Certainly not to the pope, as he impudently presumes to boast, when he assumes this title to himself; but to Christ, who exercises that office alone without vicar or successor, and resigns the honour to no other. For



this priesthood, which was prefigured in the law, consists not only in preaching or doctrine, but in the propitiation of God, which Christ effected in his death, and in that intercession which he is now making with the Father.

III. There is no reason, therefore, why they should confine us to this example, as if it were a law perpetually binding, whereas we see it was only of temporary duration. From the New Testament they have nothing to adduce in support of their opinion, but that it was said to one, "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church." (r) Again, "Peter, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep." (s) But to render these substantial proofs, it is necessary for them first to shew that he who is commanded to feed the flock of Christ, is invested with authority over all Churches, and that binding and loosing are no other than governing the whole world. But as Peter had received the command from the Lord to feed the Church, so he exhorts all other presbyters to do the same. (t) Hence it is easy to infer, that this charge of Christ conferred nothing peculiar upon Peter beyond others, or that Peter communicated to others the right which he had received. But, not to dispute to no purpose, we have in another place, from the mouth of Christ himself, a clear explanation of what he intends by *binding* and *loosing*, namely, "remitting and retaining sins." (v) The manner of *binding* and *loosing* is shewn by the whole tenour of Scripture, and particularly by Paul, when he says that the ministers of the gospel have received a commission to reconcile men to God, (w) and that they have authority to inflict punishment on those who shall reject this favour. (x)

IV. How grossly they pervert those passages which make mention of binding and loosing, I have hinted before, and shall hereafter have to state more at large. At present it is worth while to see what they can extract from that celebrated answer of Christ to Peter. He promised him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven." He said, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven." (y) If we can agree respecting the word *keys* and the manner of *binding*,

(r) Matt. xvi. 18. (s) John xxi. 16. (t) 1 Peter v. 2. (v) John xx. 23.  
(w) 2 Cor. v. 18. (x) 2 Cor. x. 6. (y) Matt. xvi. 19.

all dispute will immediately cease. For the Pope himself will readily relinquish the charge committed to the apostles, which being full of labour and trouble, would deprive him of his pleasures without yielding him any profit. Since it is the doctrine of the gospel that opens heaven to us, it is elegantly expressed by the metaphorical appellation of *keys*.—There is no other way in which men are *bound* and *loosed*, than when some are reconciled to God by faith, and others are more firmly bound by their unbelief. If the Pope assumed nothing but this to himself, I am persuaded there is no man who would either envy him or contend with him.—But this succession being laborious, and by no means lucrative, and, therefore, not at all satisfactory to the Pope, hence arises a controversy on the meaning of Christ's promise to Peter. Therefore I infer from the subject itself, that it only denotes the dignity of the apostolic office, which cannot be separated from the burden of it. For if the definition which I have given be admitted, and it cannot without the greatest effrontery be rejected, then here is nothing given to Peter that was not also common to his colleagues; because otherwise there would not only be a personal injury done to them, but the majesty of the doctrine would be diminished. This our adversaries strenuously oppose. But what does it avail them to strike upon this rock? For they can never prove, but that as the preaching of the same gospel was enjoined upon all the apostles, so they were all equally armed with the power of binding and loosing. They allege that Christ, when he promised to give the keys to Peter, constituted him head of the universal Church. But what he there promised to one, he in another passage confers upon all the rest together, and delivers it as it were into their hands. (z) If the same power, which had been promised to one, was granted to all, in what respect is he superior to his colleagues? His pre-eminence, they say, consists in this, that he receives separately by himself, as well as in common with them, that which is only given to the others in common. What if I reply, with Cyprian and Augustine, that Christ did this, not to prefer one man before others, but to display the unity of the

(z) Matt. xviii. 18. John xx. 23.

Church? For this is the language of Cyprian: "That in the person of one man God gave the keys to them all, to signify the unity of them all: that, therefore, the rest were the same as Peter, endued with an equal participation both of honour and of power: but that Christ commences with one, to shew that the Church is one." Augustine says, "If there had not been in Peter a mysterious representation of the Church, the Lord would not have said to him, I will give thee the keys; for if this was said to Peter alone, the Church possesses them not; but if the Church has the keys, Peter, when he received them, must have represented the whole Church." And in another place; "When a question was put to them all, Peter alone answers, Thou art the Christ; and to him Christ says, I will give thee the keys, as if the power of binding and loosing had been conferred upon him alone: whereas he made that answer on behalf of all, and received this power in common with all, as sustaining the character of unity. He is mentioned, therefore, one for all, because there is unity in all."

V. But this declaration, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," (a) they say, is no where to be found addressed to any other. As if in this passage Christ affirmed any thing respecting Peter, different from what Paul, and even Peter himself asserts, respecting all Christians.—For Paul makes "Christ the chief corner-stone," upon which they are built who "grow unto an holy temple in the Lord." (b) And Peter enjoins us to be "as lively stones," who being founded on that "corner-stone, elect and precious," (c) are by this connection at once united to our God and to each other. This belongs to Peter, they say, above the rest, because it is expressly attributed to him in particular. I readily allow Peter the honour of being placed among the first in the structure of the Church, or if they insist upon it, the very first of the faithful; but I will not permit them to infer from this that he possessed a primacy over the rest. For what kind of reasoning is this: he excels the rest in ardour of zeal, in doctrine, in magnanimity; therefore he possesses

(a) Matt. xvi. 18.

(b) Eph. ii. 21, 22.

(c) 1 Peter ii. 4, 5.



authority over them? As though we might not with greater plausibility conclude that Andrew was superior to Peter, because he preceded him in time, and introduced him to Christ; (d) but this I pass over. I am willing that Peter should have the precedence, but there is a great difference between the honour of preceding others, and authority over them. We see that the apostles generally paid this deference to Peter, that he used to speak first in their assembly, and took the lead in proposing, exhorting, and admonishing; but we read not a word of his power.

VI. We are not yet, however, come to that question; I only mean at present to shew, that they have no solid argument, when they wish to erect an empire over the universal Church upon no other foundation than the name of Peter.—For those antiquated fooleries with which they endeavoured at first to impose on the world, are not worthy of a relation, much less of a refutation; That the Church was founded on Peter, because it is said, “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” (e) They allege in their defence, that it has been so explained by some of the Fathers. But when this is contradicted by the whole tenour of scripture, what avails it to set up their authority in opposition to God? And why do we dispute about the meaning of those words, as though they were ambiguous or obscure; whereas nothing can be expressed with greater clearness or precision? Peter, in his own name and that of his brethren, had confessed that Christ was “the Son of God.” (f) Upon this rock Christ builds his Church, because it is the only foundation, as Paul says, “other” than which “can no man lay.” (g) Nor do I reject the authority of the Fathers in this case, from a want of testimonies in their writings to support what I maintain, if I were inclined to adduce them. But as I have observed, I am unwilling to be unnecessarily tedious to my readers in arguing so clear a subject; especially as it has been long ago discussed with sufficient copiousness and care by other writers on our side of the question.

(d) John i. 40—42.

(e) Matt. xvi. 18.

(f) Matt. xvi. 16.

(g) 1 Cor. iii. 11.

VII. Yet in fact, we can obtain no better decision of this point than from the scripture itself, if we compare all the places where it shews what office and power Peter held among the apostles, how he conducted himself, and in what manner he was received by them. On an examination of the whole, we shall only find that he was one of the twelve, equal to the rest, their companion, not their master. He proposes to the assembly, indeed, if there be any thing to be done, and delivers his opinion on what is necessary to be done; but he hears the observations of others, and not only gives them the opportunity of speaking their sentiments, but leaves them to decide, and when they have determined, he follows and obeys. (*h*) When he writes to pastors, he does not command them with authority like a superior; but makes them his colleagues, and exhorts them with a courteousness which is usual among equals. (*i*) When he is accused for having associated with the gentiles, though this is an unjust accusation, yet he answers it and vindicates himself. (*k*) Commanded by his colleagues to go with John to Samaria, he refuses not. (*l*) The apostles, by sending him, declared that they did not consider him as their superior. By his compliance and execution of the commission entrusted to him, he confessed that he was a colleague with them, but had no authority over them. If none of these facts had remained upon record, yet the Epistle to the Galatians might alone easily remove every doubt; where Paul devotes nearly two whole chapters to the sole purpose of shewing that he was equal to Peter in the dignity of the apostleship. Hence he relates that he went to Peter, not to profess subjection to him, but to testify to all the harmony of their doctrine: and that Peter required no such thing as submission, but gave him the right-hand of fellowship, that they might labour together in the vineyard of the Lord: that no less grace had been conferred upon him among the gentiles, than upon Peter among the Jews: and lastly, that when Peter acted with some degree of unfaithfulness, he was reproved by him, and stood

(*h*) Acts xv. 6—29.

(*i*) 1 Peter v. 1.

(*k*) Acts xi. 2, &c.

(*l*) Acts viii. 14, 15,

corrected by the reproof. (*m*) All these things fully prove, either that there was an equality between Paul and Peter, or at least that Peter had no more power over the rest than they had over him. And this, as I have already observed, is the professed object of Paul; to prevent his being considered as inferior in his apostolic character to Peter or John, who were his colleagues, not his masters.

VIII. But though I grant them what they require respecting Peter, by admitting that he was the chief of the apostles, and superior in dignity to all the others, yet there is no reason why they should convert a particular instance into an universal rule, and make what was done but once a perpetual precedent: for the cases are widely different. There was one chief among the apostles; doubtless because they were few in number. If there be one president over twelve men, will it therefore follow, that there ought to be but one president over a hundred thousand men? That twelve should have one among them to preside over the rest, is no wonder. For this is consistent with nature, and the common sense of mankind requires, that in every assembly, even though they are all equal in power, yet there should be one to act as moderator, by whom the others should be regulated. There is no court, council, parliament, or assembly of any description, which has not its president or chairman. So there would be no absurdity, if we acknowledged that the apostles gave this pre-eminence to Peter. But that which obtains among a small company is not immediately to be applied to the whole world, to the government of which no one man is sufficient. But the whole economy of nature, they say, teaches us, that there ought to be one supreme head over all. And in proof of this they adduce the example of cranes and bees, which always choose for themselves one leader and no more. I admit the examples which they produce; but do bees collect together from all parts of the world to choose one king? each king is content with his own hive. So among cranes every flock has its own leader. What will they prove from this, but that every Church ought to have its own

(*m*) Gal. i. ii.



bishop? Next they call us to consider examples from civil governments. They quote an observation from Homer, that it is not good to have many governors, with similar passages of other profane writers in commendation of monarchy. The answer is easy; for monarchy is not praised by Ulysses in Homer, or by any others, from an opinion that one king ought to govern the whole world. Their meaning is, that one kingdom does not admit of two kings, and that no prince can bear a partner in his throne.

IX. But supposing it to be, as they contend, good and useful that the whole world should be comprehended in one monarchy, which, however, is a monstrous absurdity; but if this were admitted, I should not therefore grant the same system to be applicable to the government of the Church.—For the Church has Christ for its sole head, under whose sovereignty we are all united together, according to that order and form of government which he himself has prescribed. They offer a gross insult to Christ, therefore, when they assign the pre-eminence over the universal Church to one man, under the pretence that it may not be destitute of a head. For “Christ is the head; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body.” (n) We see how he places all men without exception in *the body*, reserving to Christ alone the honour and name of *head*. We see how he assigns to all the members respectively a certain measure, and a determinate and limited function; so that the perfection of grace, as well as the supreme power of government, resides in Christ alone. I am aware of their usual cavil in evasion of this argument; that Christ is properly styled the sole Head, because he alone governs by his own authority and in his own name, but that this is no reason why there may not be under him another *ministerial head*, as their phrase is, to act as his vicegerent on earth. But they gain nothing by this cavil, except they first prove that this ministry was ordained by Christ. For the apostle

(n) Eph. iv. 15, 16.

teaches, that all the subordinate ministration is distributed among the members, but that the power proceeds from that one heavenly Head. (o) Or if they wish me to speak in plainer terms, since the scripture declares Christ to be the head, and ascribes this honour to him alone, it ought not to be transferred to any other, except to one whom Christ himself has appointed his representative. But such an appointment is not only no where to be found, but may be abundantly refuted by various passages.

X. Paul gives us a lively description of the Church on various occasions, but without making any mention of its having one head upon earth. On the contrary, from the description which he gives, we may rather infer that such a notion is foreign from the institution of Christ. Christ, at his ascension, withdrew from us his visible presence; nevertheless "he ascended that he might fill all things." (p) He is still, therefore, present, and will always continue present with the Church. With a view to shew us the manner in which he manifests himself, Paul calls our attention to the offices which he employs. There is "one Lord," he says, "in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And he gave some, apostles; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (q) Why does he not say, that he has appointed one to preside over all as his vicegerent? For his subject absolutely required it, and it ought by no means to have been omitted, if it had been true. "Christ," he says, "is present with us." How? "By the ministry of men whom he has appointed to the government of the Church." Why not rather, "By the ministerial head, to whom he has delegated his authority?" He mentions a unity; but it is in God and in the faith of Christ. He attributes nothing but a common ministry, and to every individual his particular share. In that commendation of unity, after having said, "There is one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism," (r) why has he not likewise imme-

(o) Ephes. i. 22. iv. 15. v. 23. Col. i. 18. ii. 10.

(p) Ephes. iv. 10. (q) Ephes. iv. 5—7, 11. (r) Ephes. iv. 4, 5.

diately added, "one supreme pontiff to preserve the Church in unity?" For if it had been true, nothing could have been more proper. Let that passage be duly considered. There is no doubt that he intends it as a representation of the sacred and spiritual government of the Church, which has since received the name of *hierarchy*. Monarchy among ministers, or the government of one over all the rest, he not only does not mention, but indicates that there is no such thing. There is no doubt also that he meant to express the nature of the union, by which the faithful are connected with Christ their Head. Now he not only makes no mention of any ministerial head, but attributes to every one of the members a particular operation, according to the measure of grace distributed to each. Nor is there any foundation for their far-fetched argument from a comparison of the heavenly and earthly hierarchy; for in judging of the former, it is not safe to go beyond the discoveries of the scripture, and in constituting the latter, it is not right to follow any other model than that which the Lord himself has delineated in his word.

XI. Now though I should make them another concession, which they will never obtain from judicious persons, that the primacy of the Church was established in Peter, and to be continued by a perpetual succession; how will they prove that its seat was fixed at Rome, so that whoever is bishop of that city must preside over the whole world? By what right do they restrict to one place, this dignity which was conferred without the mention of any place? Peter, they say, lived and died at Rome. What shall we say of Christ himself? Was it not at Jerusalem that he exercised the office of a bishop while he lived, and fulfilled the priestly office by his death? The Prince of pastors, the supreme Bishop, the Head of the Church, could not obtain this honour for the place where he lived and died; how then could Peter, who was far inferior to him? Are not these follies worse than puerile? Christ gave the honour of primacy to Peter; Peter settled at Rome; therefore, he fixed the seat of the primacy in that city. For the same reason the ancient Israelites ought to have fixed the seat of their primacy in the desert, because it was there that



Moses, their chief teacher and the prince of their prophets, exercised his ministry and died.

XII. Let us see how wretchedly they reason. Peter, they say, had the pre-eminence among the apostles. Therefore the Church in which he settled ought to have this privilege. But where was he first stationed? They reply, At Antioch. Then I infer, that the Church of Antioch is justly entitled to the primacy. They confess that it was originally the first, but allege, that Peter on his removal from it, transferred the honour which was attached to him to Rome. For there is an epistle of Pope Marcellus to the presbyters of Antioch, in which he says, "The see of Peter was at first among you, but at the command of the Lord was afterwards removed to this city." So the Church of Antioch, which was originally the first, has given place to the see of Rome. But I ask, by what oracle did that wise Pope know that the Lord had commanded this? For if this cause is to be decided on the footing of right, it is necessary for them to answer, whether this privilege be personal, or real, or mixed. It must be one of these. If they affirm it to be personal, then it has nothing to do with the place. If they allege it to be real, then when it has once been given to a place, it cannot be taken away from it by the death or removal of the person. It remains, therefore, for them to declare it to be mixed; and then it will not be sufficiently simple to consider the place, unless there be an agreement also with respect to the person. Let them choose which they will, I shall immediately conclude, and will easily prove, that the assumption of the primacy by the see of Rome is without any foundation.

XIII. Let us suppose the case, however, that the primacy was, as they pretend, transferred from Antioch to Rome. Why did not Antioch retain the second place? For if Rome has the pre-eminence of all other sees, because Peter presided there till the close of his life, to what city shall the second place be assigned but to that which was his first see? How came Alexandria then to have the precedence of Antioch? Is it reasonable that the Church of a mere disciple should be superior to the see of Peter? If honour be due to every Church according to the dignity of its founder, what

shall we say of the other Churches? Paul mentions three apostles, "who seemed to be pillars, James, Peter, and John." (s) If the first place be given to the see of Rome in honour of Peter, are not the second and third places due to Ephesus and Jerusalem, the sees of John and James? But among the patriarchates Jerusalem had the last place; Ephesus could not be allowed even the lowest corner.—Other Churches also, as well those which were founded by Paul, as those over which the other apostles presided, were left without any distinction. The see of Mark, who was only one of their disciples, obtained the honour. Either let them confess that this was a preposterous arrangement, or let them concede to us, that it is not a perpetual rule, that every Church should be entitled to the degree of honour which was enjoyed by its founder.

XIV. All that they say of the settlement of Peter in the Church of Rome, appears to me of very questionable authority. The statement of Eusebius, that he presided there twenty-five years, may be refuted without any difficulty.—For it appears, from the first and second chapter to the Galatians, that about twenty years after the death of Christ he was at Jerusalem, and that from thence he went to Antioch, where he remained for some time, but it is not certain how long. Gregory says seven years, and Eusebius twenty-five. But from the death of Christ to the end of the reign of Nero, under whom they affirm Peter to have been slain, there were only thirty-seven years. For our Lord suffered in the eighteenth year of the reign of Tiberius. If we deduct twenty years, during which, according to the testimony of Paul, Peter dwelt at Jerusalem, there will remain only seventeen years, which must now be divided between those two bishoprics. If he continued long at Antioch, he could not have resided at Rome, except for a very short time.—This point is susceptible of still clearer proof. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans on a journey when he was going to Jerusalem, (t) where he was seized, and from whence he was sent to Rome. It is probable, therefore, that this Epis-

(s) Gal. ii. 9.

(t) Rom. xv. 25.

tle was written four years before his arrival at Rome. Yet it contains no mention of Peter; which ought on no account to have been omitted, if he had presided over that Church. And in the conclusion, where he recites a long catalogue of pious persons to whom he sends his salutations, where in short he enumerates all that were known to him, he still says not a word of Peter. (v) It is unnecessary to use any long or laboured arguments with persons of sound judgment; for the case itself, and the whole argument of the epistle proclaims, that if Peter had been at Rome, he ought not to have been forgotten.

XV. Paul was afterwards brought as a prisoner to Rome. Luke states that he was received by the brethren, but says nothing of Peter. (w) From that city Paul wrote to several Churches. In some of these epistles he introduces salutations, in the names of certain brethren who were with him; but they contain not a single word implying that Peter was there at that time. Who will think it credible that, if he had been there, Paul could have passed him over in total silence? Moreover, in his Epistle to the Philippians, after having said that he had no one who discovered such sincere concern respecting the work of the Lord as Timothy, he complains that "all seek their own." (x) And to Timothy himself he makes yet a heavier complaint; "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." (y) Where was Peter then? For if they say that he was at Rome, how deep is the ignominy which Paul fixes upon him, that he was a deserter of the gospel? For he is speaking of the faithful, because he adds his prayer, "that it may not be laid to their charge." How long then, and at what time, did Peter hold that see? It will be said, It is the uniform opinion of ancient writers, that he governed that Church till his death. But those writers themselves are not agreed who was his successor. Some say it was Linus; and others, Clement.—They likewise relate many absurd and fabulous stories respecting the disputation held between him and Simon Magus. And Augustine, when treating of superstitions, acknowledges

(v) Rom. xvi. (w) Acts xxviii. 15. (x) Phil. ii. 20, 21. (y) 2 Tim. iv. 16.



that the custom, which obtained at Rome, of not fasting on the day on which Peter gained the victory over Simon Magus, arose from an opinion entertained without any sufficient authority. In the last place, the transactions of that age are so perplexed by a variety of representations, that we must not give implicit credit to every thing that is recorded. Yet, in consequence of this agreement of the ancient writers, I will not dispute his having died at Rome; but that he was bishop there, and especially for any considerable time, is what I cannot be persuaded to believe. Nor am I anxious respecting this point, because Paul testifies that the apostleship of Peter particularly belonged to the Jews, and that his own was directed to us. To add our confirmation, therefore, to the compact which they established between themselves, or rather to admit the validity of the ordinance of the Holy Spirit, it becomes us rather to look up to the apostleship of Paul than to that of Peter. For their different provinces were allotted to them by the Holy Spirit, who sent Peter to the Jews, and Paul to us. The Romanists, therefore, may seek for their primacy elsewhere, but not in the word of God, which affords not the least foundation for it.

XVI. Let us now proceed to shew, that our adversaries have no more reason for boasting of the authority of the ancient Church than of the testimony of the word of God. For when they bring forward this principle, that the unity of the Church cannot be preserved, unless it have one supreme head upon earth, to whom all the members should be subject, and that, therefore, the Lord gave the primacy to Peter, and afterwards by right of succession to the see of Rome, that it might remain there to the end of time; they also assert that this has been the usage from the beginning. Now as they grossly pervert various testimonies, I would first make this preliminary remark. I do not deny that the ancient writers uniformly give great honour to the Roman Church, and speak of it in respectful terms. This I consider as arising, principally, from three causes. In the first place, that opinion which, I know not how, had been received, that it had been founded and settled by the ministry of Peter, operated very powerfully to gain it credit and authority, and, therefore,

among the Western Churches it was called *the apostolic see*. In the second place, Because it was the capital of the empire, and on this account it is probable that it contained men superior in learning and prudence, skill and experience to those of any other place; due regard was paid to this circumstance, that the glory of the city and other far more excellent gifts of God, might not appear to be undervalued. In the third place, while the Eastern and Greek Churches, and even those in Africa, were agitated by numerous dissensions of opinion among themselves, the Church of Rome was more peaceable and less disturbed. Hence it happened, that pious and holy bishops, on being expelled from their sees, frequently resorted thither as to an asylum or port of safety. For as the people of Europe have less subtilty and activity of mind than the inhabitants of Asia and Africa, so they are not so volatile or desirous of novelty. It considerably increased the authority of the Church of Rome, therefore, that in those uncertain times, it was not so much agitated as the other Churches, and was more tenacious of the doctrine which it had once received, than all the rest; as we shall presently shew more at large. On account of these three causes, I say, it was held in more than common respect, and received many honourable testimonies from ancient writers.

XVII. But when our adversaries wish to make this a reason for ascribing to that Church the primacy and sovereign power over other Churches, they run, as I have already observed, into a gross error. To make this the more evident, I will first briefly shew what the ancient writers thought respecting this unity, on which our opponents so urgently insist. Jerome, writing to Nepotian, after having enumerated many examples of unity, at length descends to the hierarchy of the Church. "Every Church," he says, "has its distinct bishop, archpresbyter, and archdeacon, and all the order of the Church depends upon its governors." This is the language of a Roman priest, recommending unity in the order of the Church. Why does he not mention, that all Churches are connected together under one head, as by a common bond? Nothing would have been more in favour of his argument; nor can it be pretended that he omitted it

for want of recollection, for he would most readily have mentioned it, if the fact had permitted him. It is beyond all doubt, therefore, that he saw this to be the true kind of unity, which is most excellently described by Cyprian in the following passage: "There is only one bishopric, of which every bishop holds an integral part; and there is but one Church, which is widely extended into a multitude by the offspring of its fertility. As the sun has many rays, but only one light; as a tree has many branches, but only one trunk, fixed on a firm root; and as many rivers issue from one spring, and notwithstanding the number of the streams in which its overflowing abundance is diffused, yet the unity of the source remains the same; so also the Church, illuminated with the light of the Lord, extends its rays over the whole earth, yet it is one and the same light which is universally diffused, nor is the unity of the body destroyed. It stretches its branches, it pours out its ample streams all over the world; yet there is but one root, and one source." Again, "The spouse of Christ cannot be corrupted, she acknowledges one master, and preserves her fidelity to him inviolate." We see how he attributes the universal bishopric, which comprehends the whole Church, to Christ alone, and says that integral portions of it are confided to all those who discharge the episcopal office under this head. Where is the primacy of the see of Rome, if the universal bishopric be vested in Christ alone, and every bishop hold an integral portion of it? My object in these quotations has been, to convince the reader, by the way, that this principle, which the Romanists assume as an admitted and indubitable maxim, namely, that the unity of the Church requires the supremacy of some earthly head, was altogether unknown to the ancients.



## CHAPTER VII.

*The Rise and Progress of the Papal Power to its present Eminence, attended with the Loss of Liberty to the Church, and the Ruin of all Moderation.*

**I**N support of the antiquity of the primacy of the see of Rome, there is nothing to be found anterior to the decree of the council of Nice, by which the bishop of Rome is allotted the first place among the patriarchs, and is directed to superintend the neighbouring Churches. When the council makes a distinction between him and the other patriarchs, so as to assign to all their respective limits, it clearly does not constitute him the head of them all, but only makes him one of the principal. Vitus and Vincentius attended the council on the behalf of Julius, who at that time presided over the Church of Rome. They were seated in the fourth place. If Julius had been acknowledged as the head of the Church, would his representatives have been degraded to the fourth seat? would Athanasius have presided in a general council, where the form of the hierarchial system ought most particularly to have been observed? In the council of Ephesus, it appears that Celestine, who was then bishop of Rome, made use of a disingenuous artifice to secure the dignity of his see. For when he sent his legates thither, he requested Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, who was otherwise to preside, to act on his behalf. For what purpose could this request be made, but that his name might, at any rate, occupy the first place? For his legates sat in a lower station, were asked their sentiments among others, and subscribed in their order; at the same time the patriarch of Alexandria, united Celestine's name with his own. What shall I say of the second council of Ephesus, where, though the legates of Leo were present, yet Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria, presided as in his own right? They will object that this was not an orthodox council, because it condemned Flavianus, a

holy man, bishop of Constantinople, and acquitted Eutyches and sanctioned his heresy. But when the council was assembled, and the bishops took their respective seats, it is certain that the legates of the Roman Church were present among the others, as in a holy and legitimate council. Yet they contended not for the first place, but yielded it to another, which they would not have done, if they had considered it as belonging to them. For the bishops of Rome have never been ashamed of raising the greatest contentions for their dignity, and they have not hesitated, on this account alone, to harass and agitate the Church with various and pernicious controversies. But because Leo saw that it would be too presumptuous a demand to require the first place for his legates, therefore he waved it.

II. Next follows the council of Chalcedon, in which, by the permission of the emperor, the legates of the Roman Church occupied the first place. But Leo himself confessed that this was an extraordinary privilege. For when he requested it from Marcian the emperor, and Pulcheria the empress, he did not pretend it to be his right, but only alleged in support of his claim, that the Eastern bishops who presided in the council of Ephesus, had thrown every thing into confusion and abused their power. Since it was necessary therefore to have a discreet moderator, and it was improbable that those who had once been so unsteady and disorderly would be fit for the office, he requested that, on account of the misconduct and incompetence of the others, the task of presiding should be transferred to him. That which is sought as a special privilege and an exception to a common custom, certainly does not arise from a general rule. Where the only pretext is, that it was necessary to have a new president, because the former ones had violated their duty, it is evident that this had not been the case before, and it ought not to be perpetual, but was merely done in the contemplation of present danger. The bishop of Rome, therefore, had the first place in the council of Chalcedon, not because it was the right of his see, but because the council was in want of a discreet and suitable president, in consequence of those to whom that honour belonged having ex-

cluded themselves from it by their own intemperance and violence. And what I say, was proved in fact by Leo's successor. For when he sent his legates to the fifth council of Constantinople, which was held a considerable time after, he contended not for the first seat, but without any difficulty suffered it to be taken by Menna, patriarch of Constantinople. So in the council of Carthage, at which Augustine was present, the place of president was filled by Aurelius, archbishop of that city, and not by the legates of the Roman see, though the express object of their attendance was to support the authority of the Roman pontiff. And moreover there was a general council held in Italy, at which the bishop of Rome was not present. This was the council of Aquileia, at which Ambrose presided, who was then in high credit with the emperor. There was no mention made of the bishop of Rome. We see therefore that the dignity of Ambrose caused the see of Milan at that time to have the precedence above that of Rome.

III. With respect to the title of primacy, and other titles of pride, of which the pope now strangely boasts, it is not difficult to judge when and in what manner they were introduced. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, makes frequent mention of Cornelius, who was bishop of Rome. He distinguishes him by no other appellation than that of *brother*, or *brother bishop*, or *colleague*. But when he writes to Stephen, the successor of Cornelius, he not only treats him as equal to himself and others, but even addresses him with considerable severity, charging him at one time with arrogance, and at another with ignorance. Since the time of Cyprian, we know what was the decision of the whole African Church on this subject. For the council of Carthage prohibited that any one should be called "the prince of priests," or "the first bishop," but only "the bishop of the first see." But any one who examines the more ancient records, will find that at that time the bishop of Rome was content with the common appellation of *brother*. It is certain that as long as the Church retained its true and uncorrupted form, all those names of pride, which in succeeding times have been insolently usurped by the Roman see, were



altogether unknown ; nothing was heard of a supreme pontiff, or a sole head of the Church upon earth. And if the bishop of Rome had been presumptuous enough to make any such assumption, there were judicious men who would immediately have repressed his folly. Jerome, being a Roman presbyter, was not reluctant to assert the dignity of his Church, as far as matter of fact, and the state of the times admitted ; yet we see how he also reduces it to an equality with others. “ If it be a question of authority,” he says, “ the world is greater than a city. Why do you allege to me the custom of a single city ? Why do you set up a few instances, which have given rise to pride, instead of the laws of the Church ? Wherever there is a bishop, whether at Rome, at Eugubium, at Constantinople, or at Rhegium, he is of the same dignity and of the same priesthood. The power of riches, or the abasement of poverty, makes no bishop superior or inferior to another.”

IV. Respecting the title of *universal bishop*, the first contention arose in the time of Gregory, and was occasioned by the ambition of John, bishop of Constantinople. For he wanted to make himself universal bishop, an attempt which had never been made by any one before. In that controversy, Gregory does not plead against this as the assumption of a right which belonged to himself, but resolutely protests against it altogether, as a profane and sacrilegious application, and even as the forerunner of antichrist. He says, “ If he who is called *universal* falls, the foundation of the whole Church sinks at once.” In another place, “ It is a most melancholy thing to hear with any patience, that our brother and companion in the episcopal office should look down with contempt on all others, and be called *sole bishop*. But what does this pride of his indicate, but that the times of antichrist are already at hand ? For indeed he imitates him, who despising the society of angels, endeavoured to usurp supreme power to himself.” In another place, writing to Eulogius bishop of Alexandria, and Anastasius bishop of Antioch, he says ; “ None of my predecessors would ever use this profane word. For if one patriarch be called *universal*, the name of patriarch is taken away from all the

rest. But far be it from any Christian heart to wish to arrogate to himself any thing that would in the least degree diminish the honour of his brethren. To consent to that execrable term, is no other than to destroy the faith. Our obligation to preserve the unity of the faith is one thing, and to repress the haughtiness of pride is another. But I confidently assert, that whoever calls himself *universal bishop*, or desires to be so called, in such aggrandizement is the precursor of antichrist, because he proudly sets up himself above all others." Again, to Anastasius, bishop of Alexandria; "I have said that the bishop of Constantinople can have no peace with us unless he would correct the haughtiness of that superstitious and proud title which has been invented by the first apostate: and to say nothing of the injury done to your dignity, if one bishop be called *universal*, when he falls, the whole Church sinks at once." But his assertion that this honour was offered to Leo in the council of Chalcedon, has not the least appearance of truth. For there is not a word of this in the acts of that council. And Leo himself, who in many of his epistles censures the decree passed there in favour of the see of Constantinople, would certainly not have passed over this argument which would have been the most plausible of all, if that honour had really been offered to him, and he had refused it: and having otherwise an immoderate thirst for honour, he would not readily have omitted a circumstance so much to his praise. Gregory was mistaken, therefore, in supposing that title to have been given to the see of Rome by the council of Chalcedon. I forbear to remark how ridiculous it is for him to assert that the holy council conferred such a title, which he at the same time declares was profane, execrable, abominable, proud and sacrilegious, and even invented by the devil, and published by the herald of antichrist. And yet he adds that his predecessor refused it, lest by the dignity given to one individual, all other bishops should be deprived of the honour due to them. In another place he says, "No one has ever wished to be called by such a name, no one has arrogated to himself this presumptuous title; lest by assum-

ing to himself the exclusive dignity of supreme bishop, he might seem to deny the episcopal honour to all his brethren.”

V. I come now to the jurisdiction which the Roman pontiff asserts that he indisputably holds over all Churches. I know what violent contentions there were in ancient times on this subject. For there has never been a period when the Roman see did not aspire to some authority over other Churches. And it will not be unsuitable to the present occasion, to investigate the means by which it gradually rose to some power. I am not yet speaking of that unbounded empire which it has more recently usurped; that I shall defer to its proper place. But here it will be necessary to point out in a few words, in what manner and by what methods it formerly exalted itself, so as to assume any jurisdiction over other Churches. When the Eastern Churches were disturbed and divided by the factions of the Arians, in the reign of Constantius and Constans, sons of Constantine the Great, and Athanasius, the principal defender of the orthodox faith, was driven from his see, that calamity constrained him to go to Rome, in order that, by the authority of the Roman see, he might in some degree repress the rage of his enemies, and confirm the faithful who were in extreme distress. He was honourably received by Julius, then bishop of Rome, and prevailed on the bishops of the West to undertake the defence of his cause. Thus the pious in the Eastern Churches, finding themselves in great want of foreign aid, and seeing that their principal succour was to be obtained from the Church of Rome, they readily ascribed to it all the authority that they possibly could. But all this amounted to nothing more than that the communion of it was held in high estimation, and it was accounted ignominious to be excommunicated from it. This dignity was afterwards considerably augmented by men of wicked and abandoned lives; for to escape the punishments which they deserved, they resorted thither as to a common asylum. Therefore, if a priest was condemned by his bishop, or a bishop by the synod of his province, they immediately appealed to Rome. And the bishops of Rome received such appeals with culpable eager-



ness, considering it as a kind of extraordinary power to interfere in the concerns of distant Churches. Thus when Eutyches was condemned by Flavianus, patriarch of Constantinople, he complained to Leo that he had been treated with injustice. Leo without any delay, but with equal temerity and expedition, undertook the patronage of a bad cause, issued bitter invectives against Flavianus, as if he had condemned an innocent man without hearing his defence, and by this ambitious conduct he for some time afforded considerable support to the impiety of Eutyches. It appears that similar circumstances frequently happened in Africa. For as soon as any wicked man was convicted before the ordinary tribunal, he flew to Rome, and brought various false accusations against his superiors; and the see of Rome was always ready to interpose. This presumption constrained the African bishops to pass a decree that no one should appeal beyond the sea on pain of excommunication.

VI. But however this might be, let us examine what jurisdiction or power the Roman see then possessed. Now ecclesiastical power consists in these four things: the ordination of bishops, the calling of councils, the hearing of appeals, or jurisdiction, and corrective admonitions, or censures. All the ancient councils command bishops to be ordained by their own metropolitans, and they never direct the bishop of Rome to be called to this office except in his own province. By degrees, however, a custom was introduced for all the bishops of Italy to go to Rome to be consecrated, except the metropolitans, who did not suffer themselves to be subjected to this bondage. But when any metropolitan was to be ordained, the bishop of Rome sent one of his priests to assist at the ceremony, but not to preside. There is an example of this in an epistle of Gregory, respecting the consecration of Constantius, archbishop of Milan, after the death of Laurentius. I do not suppose, however, that this was a very ancient practice. It is probable that at first they sent legates to each other, from a principle of respect and affection, to witness the ordination and testify their mutual communion; and that what was originally voluntary, was afterwards considered as necessary. However this may be, it is evident

that in ancient times the bishop of Rome did not possess the power of consecrating bishops, except in his own province, that is, in the Churches dependent upon his see; as is declared by one of the canons of the council of Nice. Consecration was followed by the sending of a synodical epistle; and in this the bishop of Rome had no superiority over others. It was the custom of the patriarchs, immediately after their consecration, to make a solemn declaration of their faith in a written communication to their brethren, professing their adherence to the doctrine of the holy and orthodox councils. Thus, by making a confession of their faith, they mutually approved themselves to each other. If the bishop of Rome had received such a confession from others, and not given it to other bishops in his turn, this would have been an instance of acknowledged superiority; but as he was under the same obligation to give it as to require it, and was subject to the common law, it was certainly a token of equality and not of dominion. We have examples of this in the epistles of Gregory to Anastasius and Cyriacus of Constantinople, and to all the patriarchs together.

VII. Next follow admonitions or censures, which as the bishops of Rome formerly employed towards others, they also received them from others in their turn. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, sharply reprovèd Victor, bishop of Rome, for having raised a pernicious dissension in the Church, on subjects of no importance. Victor submitted to the reproof without any opposition. It was a liberty at that time commonly used by the holy bishops to exercise the privilege of brethren towards the bishop of Rome, by admonishing and reprovng him whenever he committed any fault. He in like manner, when occasion required, admonished others of their duty, and reprovèd them for their faults. For Cyprian, when he exhorts Stephen, bishop of Rome, to admonish the bishops of France, argues not from any superior authority, but from the common rights which priests enjoy among each other. If Stephen had then possessed any authority over France, would not Cyprian have said, You should chastise them, because they are subject to you? But he expresses

himself in a very different manner. "This fraternal union," says he, "by which we are connected together, requires us to administer to each other mutual admonition." And we see with what severity of language, though otherwise a man of a mild disposition, he censures even Stephen himself, when he considered him as assuming too much consequence. In this respect also there is yet no appearance of the bishop of Rome having been invested with any jurisdiction over those who were not of his province.

VIII. With respect to the calling of councils, it was the duty of every metropolitan, at stated seasons, to summon a provincial synod. There the bishop of Rome had no authority. But an universal council could only be called by the emperor. For if any one of the bishops had attempted this, not only he would not have been obeyed by those who were out of his province, but such an attempt would have led to immediate confusion. Therefore the emperor sent a summons to attend to all of them alike. Socrates, indeed, in his Ecclesiastical History, states that Julius, bishop of Rome, expostulated with the Eastern bishops, for not having invited him to the council of Antioch; whereas the canons had forbidden that any thing should be decreed without the knowledge of the bishop of Rome. But who does not see that this is to be understood of those decrees which bind the universal Church? Now it is no wonder if there was so much respect paid to the antiquity and eminence of the city, and to the dignity of the see, as to determine that no general decree respecting religion should be passed in the absence of the bishop of Rome, unless he refused to be present. But what is this towards dominion over the whole Church? For we do not deny that the bishop of Rome was one of the principal, but we will not admit, what the Romanists now contend, that he had the authority over all.

IX. There remains the fourth kind of ecclesiastical power, which consists in appeals. It is evident that he possesses supreme authority, to whose tribunal appeals are made. Many often appealed to the bishop of Rome; and he also attempted to assume the cognizance of causes; but he always became an object of derision, whenever he exceeded



his proper limits. I shall say nothing of the East, or of Greece; but it appears that the bishops of France strenuously resisted him, when he discovered an inclination to usurp authority over them. In Africa, this subject occasioned a long controversy. For when the council of Milevum, at which Augustine was present, had denounced excommunication against all who should appeal beyond the sea, the bishop of Rome endeavoured to get this decree rescinded. He sent legates to state that this privilege had been given to him by the council of Nice. The legates produced certain acts, which they alleged to be the acts of the council of Nice, and which they had brought from the archives of their Church. They were resisted by the Africans, who denied that the bishop of Rome ought to be credited in his own cause. They therefore determined to send to Constantinople and other cities of Greece, to obtain copies liable to less suspicion. It was found that these copies contained no such passages as the Roman legates had pretended. So the decree was confirmed, which had taken the supreme cognizance of appeals from the bishop of Rome. This transaction discovered the scandalous impudence of the Roman pontiff. For when he had fraudulently substituted the council of Sardis for that of Nice, he was disgracefully detected in a manifest falsehood. But still greater wickedness and effrontery were betrayed by those who added to the acts of the council a forged epistle, in which a bishop of Carthage condemns the arrogance of his predecessor, Aurelius, for having dared to withdraw himself from obedience to the apostolic see, presents the submission of himself and his Church, and humbly supplicates for pardon. These are the glorious monuments of antiquity, upon which the majesty of the Roman see is founded; while, under the pretext of antiquity, they advance such puerile falsehoods, as require not the least penetration to detect. "Aurelius," says this famous epistle, "elated with diabolical audacity and obstinacy, was a rebel against Christ and Saint Peter, and therefore deserved to be anathematized." But what said Augustine? What said all the fathers who were present at the council of Milevum? But what necessity is there for

spending many words to refute that stupid fabrication, which even the Romanists themselves, if they have any modesty left, cannot look at without being exceedingly ashamed? So Gratian, the compiler of the decretal, whether from wickedness or ignorance I know not, after having recited that canon, That those who appealed beyond the sea, should be excommunicated, adds this exception, unless they appeal to the see of Rome. What can be done with such men, who are so destitute of common sense, as to make that one case an exception to a law, to guard against which every one sees that the law was made? For the council, in condemning appeals beyond the sea, only prohibited any one from appealing to Rome; and this admirable expositor excepts Rome from the general prohibition!

X. But, to put an end at once to this question, a single transaction, related by Augustine, will be sufficient to shew what kind of jurisdiction was anciently possessed by the bishop of Rome. Donatus, bishop of Casæ Nigræ, had accused Cæcilianus, bishop of Carthage. The accused was condemned without a hearing. For knowing that the bishops had conspired against him, he would not appear. The matter was then brought before the emperor Constantine. With a view to have the cause decided by an ecclesiastical judgment, he referred the cognizance of it to Melchiades, bishop of Rome, with whom he associated some other bishops from Italy, France, and Spain. If it was part of the ordinary jurisdiction of the see of Rome, to hear an appeal in an ecclesiastical cause, why did Melchiades suffer any colleagues to be appointed with him at the pleasure of the emperor? and moreover, why did he himself undertake the business rather at the command of the emperor than from his own authority? But let us hear what took place afterwards. Cecilian was victorious. Donatus of Casæ Nigræ was convicted of calumny. He appealed. Constantine referred the appeal to the bishop of Arles. He sat in judgment on the decision of the bishop of Rome. If the Roman see possessed the supreme jurisdiction, subject to no appeal, how did Melchiades submit to such an insult, as for the bishop of Arles to be preferred before him? And who was the emperor that did this? It was Constantine

the Great, of whom they boast that he not only devoted all his attention, but employed almost all the power of his empire to exalt the dignity of their see. We see then how very far the bishop of Rome was at that time from that supreme dominion which he pretends to have been given him by Christ over all Churches, and which he falsely boasts of having exercised in all ages with the consent of the whole world.

XI. I know what numerous epistles, and rescripts, and edicts there are, in which the pontiffs have confidently advanced the most extravagant claims respecting this power. But it is also known to every person, possessed of the least sense or learning, that most things contained in them are so extremely absurd, that it is easy to discover at the first glance from what source they have proceeded. For what man of sound judgment, and in his sober senses, can suppose that Anacletus was the author of that curious interpretation, which Gratian quotes under his name; that Cephas means a head? There are many such fooleries collected together by Gratian without any judgment, which the Romanists in the present day employ against us in defence of their see: and such phantoms, with which they used to delude the ignorant in the darkest times, they still persist in bringing forward amidst all the light of the present age. But I have no intention to devote much labour to the refutation of such things, which manifestly refute themselves by their extreme absurdity. I confess that there are also genuine epistles of the ancient pontiffs, in which they extol the majesty of their see by the most magnificent titles. Such are some epistles of Leo; who, though he was a man of learning and eloquence, had likewise an immoderate thirst for glory and dominion: but whether the Churches at that time gave credit to his testimony when he thus exalted himself, is a subject of inquiry. Now it appears that many were offended at his ambition, and resisted his claims. In one epistle he deposes the bishop of Thessalonica to act as his representative in Greece and other adjacent countries; in another he delegates the bishop of Arles, or some other bishop, to be his vicar in France. So he appoints Hormisdas, bishop of Seville, his



vicar in Spain. But in all cases he mentions, by way of exception, that he makes such appointments on condition that they shall in no respect infringe the ancient privileges of the metropolitans. But Leo himself declares this to be one of their privileges, that if any difficulty should arise, the metropolitan was to be consulted in the first place. These delegations therefore were accompanied with this condition, that there was to be no interference with any bishop in his ordinary jurisdiction, with any metropolitan in hearing appeals, or with any provincial synod in the regulation of the Churches. Now what was this but to abstain from all jurisdiction, and only to interpose for the settlement of disputes, as far as was consistent with the law and nature of ecclesiastical communion?

XII. In the time of Gregory, this ancient custom had already undergone a considerable change. For when the empire was convulsed and torn asunder, when France and Spain were afflicted with repeated and numerous wars and distresses, Illyricum laid waste, Italy harassed, and Africa almost ruined with incessant calamities; in order to preserve the unity of the faith amidst such a violent convulsion of civil affairs, or at least to prevent its total destruction, all the bishops round about connected themselves more closely with the bishop of Rome. The consequence was that the power as well as the dignity of that see, was greatly increased. I am not much concerned, however, respecting the methods by which this was effected. It is at least evident, that it was greater at that period than in the preceding ages. And even then it was very far from an unlimited dominion, for one man to govern all others according to his own pleasure. But the see of Rome was held in such reverence, that its authority would repress and correct the refractory and obstinate, who could not be confined to their duty by the other bishops. For Gregory embraces every opportunity of protesting, that he as faithfully maintained the rights of others, as he required them to maintain his. "Nor under the influence of ambition," says he, "do I withhold from any one that which is his right; but I desire to honour my brethren in all things."—There is not a sentence in his writings, which contains a

prouder boast of the majesty of his primacy than the following: "I know no bishop who is not subject to the apostolic see, when he is found in fault." But he immediately adds, "Where there is no fault to require subjection, all are equal by right of humility." He attributes to himself the authority to correct those who have transgressed: if all do their duty he places himself on an equality with them. But he assumed this authority to himself, and they who were willing consented to it, while others who disapproved of it were at liberty to oppose it with impunity; and this, it is notorious, was the conduct of the majority. Besides, it is to be remarked, that he is there speaking of the primate of Constantinople, who had been condemned by a provincial synod, and had disregarded the united judgment of the assembly. His colleagues complained to the emperor of his obstinacy. The emperor appointed Gregory to decide the cause. We see then that he made no attempt to interfere with the ordinary jurisdiction; and that the very thing which he does for the assistance of others, he does only at the command of the emperor.

XIII. This, therefore, was all the power which was then possessed by the bishop of Rome;—to oppose rebellious and refractory persons, in cases which required some extraordinary remedy, and that in order to assist, not to hinder, other bishops. Therefore he assumes to himself no more power over others than he grants to all others over himself, when he professes that he is ready to be reproved by all, and to be corrected by all. So in another epistle he commands the bishop of Aquileia to come to Rome to plead his cause in a controversy which had arisen between him and his neighbours, respecting an article of faith: nevertheless he gives this command, not from his own authority, but in consequence of the mandate of the emperor. Nor does he announce himself as the sole judge, but promises to assemble a synod to judge of the whole affair. But though there was still such moderation, that the power of the Roman see had its certain limits, which it was not permitted to exceed, and the bishop of Rome himself no more presided over others than he was subject to them; yet it appears how very displeasing this situation was to Gregory. For he frequently complains,

that under the name of being a bishop, he was forced back to the world, and that he was more involved in secular cares than ever he had been while he was a layman; so that in that honour he was oppressed with the tumult of worldly business. In another passage he says, "Such a vast burden of occupations presses me down, that my mind is incapacitated for any elevation towards things above. I am tossed about with numerous causes like so many waves; and after my former seasons of retirement and tranquillity, I am disquieted with the tempests of a tumultuous life; so that I may truly say, I am come into the depth of the sea, and the tempest has drowned me." Judge then what he would have said, if he had fallen upon these times. If he did not fulfil the office of a pastor, yet he was employed in it. He refrained from all interference in the civil government, and acknowledged himself to be subject to the emperor in common with others. He never intruded into the care of other Churches, except when he was constrained by necessity. And yet he considered himself to be in a labyrinth, because he could not wholly devote himself to the exclusive duties of a bishop.

XIV. The bishop of Constantinople, as we have already stated, was at that time engaged in a contest with the bishop of Rome, respecting the primacy. For after the seat of the empire was fixed at Constantinople, the majesty of the government seemed to require that Church to be the next in dignity to the Church of Rome. And indeed at the beginning nothing contributed more to establish the primacy in the Church of Rome than the circumstance of that city being then the capital of the empire. Gratian recites a rescript under the name of Pope Lucinus, in which he says that the distinction of cities appointed to be the residence of metropolitans and primates, was regulated by no other rule than the nature of the civil government previously established in them. There is another similar rescript, also, under the name of Pope Clement, in which he says, that patriarchs had been appointed in those cities which had anciently been the stations of arch-flamens. This statement, though erroneous, approaches to the truth. For it is certain, that in order to make as little change as possible, the provinces were



divided according to the existing state of things, and that primates and metropolitans were placed in those cities which had precedence of the rest in dignity and power. Therefore in the council of Turin it was decreed, that those which were the chief cities of the respective provinces in the civil government, should be the principal sees of bishops; and that if the honour of the civil government should happen to be transferred from one city to another, the seat of the metropolitan should be removed to the same place. But Innocent, the Roman Pontiff, seeing the ancient dignity of his city beginning to decline, after the translation of the seat of the empire to Constantinople, and trembling for the honour of his see, enacted a contrary law; in which he denies the necessity of a change of the ecclesiastical capitals, in consequence of a change of the imperial capitals. But the authority of a council ought to be preferred to the sentence of an individual, and we may justly suspect Innocent himself in his own cause. He proves by his decree, however, that the original regulation had been for the seats of metropolitans to be disposed according to the civil rank of the respective cities.

XV. According to this ancient ordinance, it was decreed in the first council of Constantinople, that the bishop of that city should have the next rank and dignity to the bishop of Rome, because that was a New Rome. But when a similar decree was passed long after in the council of Chalcedon, Leo strenuously opposed it. And he not only took the liberty of pouring contempt on what had been decided by upwards of six hundred bishops, but likewise heavily reproached them with having taken from other sees the honour which they had ventured to confer on the Church of Constantinople. Now what could incite him to disturb the world for so insignificant a cause, but mere ambition? He says, that what had once been determined by the council of Nice, ought to have been maintained inviolable. As if the Christian faith were endangered by the preference of one Church to another, or as if the patriarchates has been distributed by the council of Nice with any other view than the preservation of external order. Now we know that external order admits, and even requires

various changes, according to the various circumstances of different periods. It is a futile pretence, therefore, of Leo, that the honour, which the authority of the Nicene council had given to the see of Alexandria, ought not to be conferred on that of Constantinople. For common sense dictates, that this was such a decree as might be abolished according to the state of the times. And how did the repeal meet with no opposition from the bishops of the East, who were most interested in the matter? Proterius, who had been appointed bishop of Alexandria instead of Dioscorus, was present; as were other patriarchs, whose dignity was lessened by this measure. It was for them to oppose it, and not Leo who retained his original station unaltered. When they all suffered it to pass without any objection, and even assented to it, and the bishop of Rome was the only one who resisted it; it is easy to judge by what motive he was influenced. He foresaw, what actually came to pass not long after, that as the glory of Rome was declining, Constantinople would not be content with the second place, but would contend for the primacy. Yet all his clamour was unavailing; the decree of the council was confirmed. Therefore his successors, seeing themselves vanquished, peaceably refrained from such obstinacy: for they decreed that he should be accounted the second patriarch.

XVI. But a little while after, John, who presided over the Church of Constantinople while Gregory was bishop of Rome, had the arrogance to assume the title of universal patriarch. Gregory, not afraid of defending his see in a good cause, constantly opposed this assumption. And certainly it betrayed intolerable pride and folly in John to wish to make the limits of his bishopric the same with those of the empire. Now Gregory did not claim to himself what he denied to another; but execrated the title, by whomsoever it might be usurped, as wicked and impious. In one of his epistles he expresses his displeasure with Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria, for having complimented him with such a title. "Behold," says he, "in the preface of the epistle which ye have directed to myself, who have forbidden it, you have taken care to introduce that appellation of pride, by

calling me universal pope. Which I entreat that your holiness will not do any more; because all that you give to another, beyond what is reasonable, is deducted from yourself. I consider nothing an honour to me, by which I see the honour of my brethren diminished. For my honour is the honour of the universal Church, and the perfect vigour of my brethren. If your holiness calls me universal pope, this is denying that you have any share in that which is wholly attributed to me." Gregory's was a good and honourable cause; but John, being supported by the favour of Mauritius the emperor, could not be diverted from his purpose; and Cyriacus, his successor, was equally inflexible.

XVII. At length Phocas, who ascended the throne after the murder of Mauritius, being more favourable to the Romans, for what reason I know not, except because he had been crowned at Rome without any difficulty, granted to Boniface the Third, what Gregory had never demanded,—that Rome should be the head of all Churches. Thus the controversy was decided. Yet this grant of the emperor could not have been so much to the advantage of the see of Rome, if it had not been followed by other things. For Greece and all Asia soon after separated from its communion. France revered it so far as not to carry its obedience beyond its inclinations; nor was it reduced to entire subjection, till Pepin had usurped the crown. For after Zachary, the Roman pontiff, had assisted Pepin in the commission of treason and robbery, in deposing his lawful sovereign, and taking possession of the throne, he was rewarded by the see of Rome being invested with jurisdiction over the Gallican Churches. As robbers are accustomed to divide their common booty, so those worthy persons concerted together, that Pepin should have the temporal and civil sovereignty after the deposition of the rightful monarch, and that Zachary should be made the head over all bishops, and enjoy the spiritual power. At first this was feeble, as is generally the case with new establishments, but it was afterwards confirmed by the authority of Charlemagne, and almost from a similar cause; for he also was indebted to the Roman pontiff, for his exertions in raising him to the dignity of emperor.—



Now though it is probable, that the Churches before that time had in general been greatly disfigured, it is evident that in France and Germany the ancient form of the Church was then entirely obliterated. The archives of the parliament of Paris still contain brief registers of those times, which in relating ecclesiastical events make frequent mention of the treaties both of Pepin and Charlemagne with the Roman pontiff; from which it may be concluded that an alteration was then made in the ancient state of the Church.

XVIII. From that time, as things daily became worse and worse, the tyranny of the Roman see was gradually established and increased, and that partly through the ignorance,) and partly through the indolence of the bishops. For while the Roman pontiff was usurping every thing to himself, and proceeding from one assumption to another, without any limits, in defiance of law and justice, the bishops did not exert themselves with the zeal which became them to repress his cupidity, and where there was no want of inclination, they were destitute of real learning and knowledge, so that they were not at all equal to such an important undertaking. We see, therefore, what a horrible profanation of every thing sacred, and what a total disorganization of the Church there was at Rome in the days of Bernard. He complains that the ambitious, the avaricious, the simoniacal, the sacrilegious, the adulterous, the incestuous, and all who were chargeable with the most atrocious crimes, from every part of the world, resorted to Rome, in order to procure or to retain ecclesiastical honours by the apostolical authority; and that fraud, circumvention, and violence, were generally practised. He says that the judicial process which was then pursued was execrable, and not only unbecoming of the Church, but disgraceful to any civil court. He exclaims, that the Church is full of ambitious men, and that there is not one who is any more afraid of perpetrating the most flagitious crimes, than robbers in their den when they are distributing the plunder which they have seized on the highway. "Few," he says, "regard the mouth of the legislator, they all look at his hands, and that not without cause, for those hands transact all that is done by the Pope. What a busi-

ness it is, that they are bought with the spoils of the Church, who say to you, Well done, well done! The life of the poor is sown in the streets of the rich; silver glitters in the mire; people run to it from all parts; it is borne away not by the poorest but by the strongest, or perhaps by him who runs fastest. This custom, or rather this mortal corruption, commenced not with you; I wish it may end with you. In these circumstances you a pastor are proceeding, covered with abundant and costly attire. If I might dare to use the expression, these are rather the pastors of devils than of sheep. Did Peter act in this manner? Was Paul guilty of such trifling? Your court has been accustomed to receive men good, more than to make them so. For the wicked are not improved in it, but the good are corrupted." The abuses of appeals which he relates, no pious person can read without the greatest horror. At length, respecting the insatiable cupidity of the see of Rome in the usurpation of jurisdiction, he concludes in the following manner: "I speak the murmur and common complaint of the Churches. They exclaim, that they are divided and dismembered. There are few or none of them who do not either bewail or dread this plague. Do you inquire what plague? Abbots are revolted from their bishops, bishops from their archbishops. It is wonderful if this can be excused. By such conduct you prove that you have a plenitude of power, but not of justice. You act thus because you can, but the question is whether you ought.—You are appointed to preserve to all their respective honour and rank, and not to envy them." These few passages I have thought proper to recite, out of a great many, partly that the readers may see how sadly the Church had then declined, and partly that they may know into what sorrow and lamentation the faithful were plunged by this calamity.

XIX. But though we should grant to the Roman pontiff in the present day the same eminence and extent of jurisdiction which this see possessed in the middle ages, as in the times of Leo and Gregory, what is that to the papacy in its present state? I am not yet referring to the temporal and secular power, which we shall afterwards examine in its proper place; but the spiritual government itself of which

they boast, what resemblance has it to the condition of those times? For the Romanists designate the Pope no otherwise than as the supreme head of the Church on earth, and universal bishop of the whole world. And the pontiffs themselves, when they speak of their authority, pronounce with great superciliousness, that they have the power to command, and that to others is only left the necessity to obey; that all their decrees are to be received as if they were confirmed by the voice of Saint Peter; that for want of their presence, provincial synods have no authority; that they have the power to ordain priests and deacons for all the Churches, and to summon to their see those who have been otherwise ordained. In the Decretal of Gratian there are innumerable pretensions of this kind, which I forbear to recite, lest I should be too tedious to my readers. But the sum of them all comes to this; that the Roman pontiff alone has the supreme cognizance of all ecclesiastical causes, whether in judging and determining doctrines, in enacting laws, in regulating discipline, or in exercising jurisdiction. It would also be tedious and superfluous to enumerate the privileges which they assume to themselves in reservations, as they call them. But what is the most intolerable of all, they leave no judgment on earth to curb or restrain their cupidity, if they abuse such unlimited power. "It cannot be lawful," they say, "for any one to reject the judgment of this see, on account of the primacy of the Roman Church." Again, "The judge shall not be judged, either by the emperor or by kings, or by all the clergy, or by the people." This is arrogance beyond all bounds, for one man to constitute himself judge of all, and to refuse to submit to the judgment of any. But what if he exercise tyranny over the people of God, if he divide and desolate the kingdom of Christ, if he disturb and overturn the whole Church, if he pervert the pastoral office into a system of robbery? Even though he should go to the greatest extremes of profligacy and mischief, he denies that he is at all accountable for his conduct. For these are the very words of the pontiffs: "God hath been pleased to decide the causes of other men by the judgment of men, but the prelate of this see he hath without all question reserved to his own judg-



ment." Again, "The actions of our subjects are judged by us; but ours by God alone."

XX. And that such edicts might have the more weight, they have falsely substituted the names of ancient pontiffs, as if things had been so regulated from the beginning; whereas it is very certain, that every thing, which attributes to the Roman pontiff more than we have stated to have been given him by the ancient councils, is a novel and recent fabrication. They have even gone to such a pitch of impudence as to publish a rescript, under the name of Anastasius, patriarch of Constantinople, which declares that it had been ordained by the ancient canons, that nothing should be done even in the remotest provinces, without being first reported to the Roman see. Beside the notorious falsehood of this, what man will think it credible, that such an eulogium of the Roman see proceeded from the adversary and rival of its honour and dignity? But it was necessary that these antichrists should be carried to such an extreme of madness and blindness, that their iniquity may be evident to all men of sound understanding, who only choose to open their eyes. But the Decretal Epistles, compiled by Gregory the Ninth, as well as the Constitutions of Clement the Fifth, and the Decrees of Martin, still more openly and expressly betray, in every page, the inhuman ferocity and tyranny of barbarous kings. But these are the oracles from which the Romanists wish their papacy to be appreciated. Hence proceeded those famous axioms, which at the present day are universally received by them as oracles: That the pope cannot err; that the pope is superior to all councils; that the pope is the universal bishop of all Churches, and supreme head of the Church upon earth. I pass over the far greater absurdities, which foolish canonists maintain in their schools; which, however, the Roman theologians not only assent to, but even applaud, in order to flatter their idol.

XXI. I shall not treat them with all the severity which they deserve. To this consummate insolence, another person would oppose the declaration of Cyprian among the bishops at the council of Carthage, of which he was president; "No one of us calls himself bishop of bishops, or, by tyrannical

fear, constrains his colleagues to the necessity of obeying him." He would object what was decreed at Carthage some time after, "That no one should be called *prince of priests*, or *first bishop*." He would collect many testimonies from histories, many canons of councils, and various passages from the writings of the Fathers, by which the Roman pontiff would be reduced to the rank of other bishops. I pass over these things however, that I may not appear to lay too much stress upon them. But let the most able advocates of the Roman see answer me, with what face they can dare to defend the title of *universal bishop*, which they find to have been so often anathematized by Gregory? If the testimony of Gregory be entitled to any credit, they cannot make their pontiff universal bishop without thereby declaring him to be Antichrist. Nor was the title of *head* any more in use at that time; for in one of his epistles he says; "Peter is the principal member in the body; John, Andrew, and James, were heads of particular people. Yet they are all members of the Church under one head. Even the saints before the law, the saints under the law, the saints under grace, are all placed among the members, and no one ever wished himself to be called *universal*." The arrogant pretensions of the pontiff to the power of commanding are very inconsistent with an observation made by Gregory in another passage. For when Eulogius, bishop of Alexandria, had represented himself as commanded by him, he replies in the following manner:—"I beseech you, let me not hear the word *command* mentioned again; for I know what I am, and what you are. In station, you are my brethren; in holiness, you are my fathers. Therefore I gave no command, but intended to suggest to you such things as appeared to be useful." By extending his jurisdiction as he does without any limits, the pope does a grievous and atrocious injury not only to other bishops but to all other Churches, which he distracts and divides by such conduct, in order to establish his own see upon their ruins. But when he exempts himself from all the judgments of others, and determines to reign in such a tyrannical manner as to have no law but his own pleasure, this is certainly so unbecoming, and foreign from the order of the

Church, that it is altogether intolerable, and incapable of any defence. For it is utterly repugnant not only to every sentiment of piety, but even of humanity.

XXII. But that I may not be obliged to pursue and discuss every particular point, I again appeal to those of my contemporaries, who would be considered as the most able and faithful advocates of the Roman see, whether they are not ashamed to defend the present state of the papacy, which is evidently a hundred times more corrupt than it was in the times of Gregory and Bernard, but which even then so exceedingly displeased those holy men. Gregory every where complains, that he was excessively distracted with occupations unsuitable to his office; that under the name of being a bishop, he was carried back to the world; that he was involved in secular cares, to a greater extent than he could remember to have been while he was a layman; that he was oppressed with the tumult of worldly business, so that his mind was incapacitated for any elevation towards things above; that he was tossed about with numerous causes like so many waves, and disquieted with the tempests of a tumultuous life, so that he might justly say, "I am come into the depth of the sea," Amidst these worldly avocations, however, he could still instruct the people by public preaching, give private admonition and reproof to those who required it, regulate his Church, give advice to his colleagues, and exhort them to their duty; beside these things, he had some time left for writing; yet he deplores his calamity, in being plunged into the depth of the sea. If the administration of that age was a sea, what must be said of the papacy in its present state? For what resemblance is there between them? Here we find no sermons preached, no attention to discipline, no concern for the Churches, no spiritual function performed; in a word, nothing but the world. Yet this labyrinth is praised, as though nothing could be found better constituted, or better administered. What complaints are poured out by Bernard, what lamentations does he utter, when he beholds the vices of his times? What would he say then, if he could behold this our iron, or if possible, worse than iron age? What impudence is it, not only pertinaciously to defend as sacred and divine what all the holy Fathers have



reprobated with one voice, but also to abuse their testimony in vindication of the papacy, which it is evident was utterly unknown to them! In the time of Bernard, however, I confess the corruption was so great that there was no great difference between that age and the present; but those who adduce any plea for the existing state of things from the time of Leo, Gregory, and others in that middle period, must be destitute of all shame. This conduct resembles that of any one, who to vindicate the monarchy of the Roman emperors, should commend the ancient state of the Roman government; which would be no other than borrowing the praises of liberty, to adorn a system of tyranny.

XXIII. Lastly, though all these things were conceded to them, they would be called to a new controversy, when we deny that there exists at Rome a Church in which such privileges can reside, or a bishop capable of exercising these dignified prerogatives. Supposing therefore all these things to be true, which however we have already refuted; that by the voice of Christ, Peter had been constituted head of the universal Church; that the honour vested in him, he had committed to the Roman see; that this had been established by the authority of the ancient Church, and confirmed by long usage; that all men with one consent had invariably acknowledged the supreme power of the Roman pontiff; that he had been the judge in all causes and of all men, and had been subject to the judgment of none: though they should have all these concessions, and any more that they wished, yet I reply in one word, that none of them would be of any avail, unless there be at Rome a Church and a bishop. They must of necessity allow, that Rome cannot be the mother of churches, unless it be itself a Church, and that he cannot be the prince of bishops, who is not a bishop himself. Do they wish then to make Rome the apostolic see? Let them shew me a true and legitimate apostleship. Do they wish to have the supreme pontiff? Let them shew me a bishop? But where will they shew us any form or appearance of a Church? They mention it indeed, and have it frequently in their mouths. But the Church is known by certain marks, and a bishopric is a name of office. I am not now speaking of the people,

but of the government itself, which ought always to appear in the Church. Where is the ministry, such as Christ's institution requires? Let us remember what has already been said of the office of presbyters and bishops. If we bring the office of cardinals to that rule, we shall confess that they have no resemblance to presbyters. And I should wish to know what resemblance the pontiff himself bears to a bishop. The first duty of the episcopal office is to instruct the people from the word of God; the second duty, closely connected with the first, is to administer the sacraments; the third is to admonish, exhort, and reprove those who offend, and to regulate the people by holy discipline. Which of these duties does he perform? which of them does he even pretend to perform? Let them tell me then, upon what principle they require him to be considered as a bishop, who never, even in appearance, with his little finger touches the least portion of the duty.

XXIV. The case of a bishop is different from that of a king, who still retains the honour and title of a king, though he execute none of the royal functions. But in judging of a bishop, regard is to be paid to the commission of Christ, which ought always to continue in force in the Church. Let the Romanists therefore furnish me with a solution of this difficulty. I deny that their pontiff is the chief of bishops, because he is not a bishop himself. Now they must prove this second member of my position to be false, if they will obtain the victory in the first. But what must be the conclusion, if he not only has no characteristic of a bishop, but every thing contrary to it? But here where shall I begin; with his doctrine, or his conduct? What shall I say? What shall I omit? Where shall I stop? I will make this assertion; that as the world is at present filled with so many corrupt and impious doctrines, loaded with such various kinds of superstitions, blinded with such numerous errors, and immersed in such profound idolatry; there is not one of these evils which has not originated from the see of Rome, or at least been confirmed by it. Nor is there any other cause for the violent rage of the pontiffs against the revived doctrine of the gospel, and for their exertion of all their power to crush it,

and their instigation of all kings and princes to persecute it, but that they see that their whole kingdom will decline and fall to the ground, where the primitive gospel of Christ shall be received. Leo was cruel; Clement was sanguinary; Paul is ferocious. But it is not so much that nature has impelled them to impugn the truth, as that this was the only way to defend their power. As they cannot be safe, therefore, without ruining Christ, they labour in this cause as if it were in the defence of their religion, their habitations, their lives. What then, shall we consider that as the apostolic see, where we behold nothing but a horrible apostacy? Shall he be regarded as the vicar of Christ, who by his furious exertions in persecuting the Church, unequivocally declares himself to be Antichrist? Shall he be deemed Peter's successor, who rages with fire and sword to demolish all that Peter built? Shall we acknowledge him to be head of the Church, who after severing the Church from Christ, its only true Head, divides and tears it in pieces? Though it be admitted that Rome was once the mother of all Churches, yet from the time when it began to be the seat of Antichrist, it has ceased to be what it was before.

XXV. Some persons think us too severe and censorious, when we call the Roman pontiff, Antichrist. But those who are of this opinion do not consider that they bring the same charge of presumption against Paul himself, after whom we speak, and whose language we adopt. And lest any one should object, that we improperly pervert to the Roman pontiff those words of Paul, which belong to a different subject, I shall briefly shew that they are not capable of any other interpretation than that which applies them to the papacy. Paul says, that Antichrist "sitteth in the temple of God." (z) In another place also the Holy Spirit, describing his image in the person of Antiochus, declares that his kingdom will consist in "speaking great words," or blasphemies, "against the Most High." (a) Hence we conclude, that it is rather a tyranny over the souls of men than over their bodies, which is erected in opposition to the spiritual kingdom of

(z) 2 Thessa. ii. 4.

(a) Dan. vii. 25.



Christ. And in the next place, that this tyranny is one which does not abolish the name of Christ or of his Church, but rather abuses the authority of Christ, and conceals itself under the character of the Church, as under a mask. Now though all the heresies and schisms which have existed from the beginning belong to the kingdom of Antichrist, yet when Paul predicts an approaching apostacy, he signifies by this description that that seat of abomination shall then be erected, when an universal defection shall have seized the Church, notwithstanding many members dispersed in different places persevere in the unity of the faith. When he adds that even in his days "the mystery of iniquity" did "already work" (*b*) in secret, what it was afterwards to effect in a more public manner, he gives us to understand that this calamity was neither to be introduced by one man, nor to terminate with one man. Now when he designates Antichrist by this character, that he would rob God of his honour in order to assume it to himself, this is the principal indication which we ought to follow in our inquiries after Antichrist, especially where such pride proceeds to a public desolation of the Church. As it is evident therefore, that the Roman pontiff has impudently transferred to himself some of the peculiar and exclusive prerogatives of God and Christ, it cannot be doubted that he is the captain and leader of this impious and abominable kingdom.

XXVI. Now let the Romanists go and object antiquity against us; as if in such a subversion of every thing, the honour of the see could remain, where no see exists. Eusebius relates that God, in order to make way for his vengeance, removed the Church from Jerusalem to Pella. What we are informed did happen once, may have happened oftener. Therefore to attach the honour of the primacy to any particular place, so that he who is in fact the most inveterate enemy of Christ, the greatest adversary of the gospel, the desolator and destroyer of the Church, the most cruel murderer and butchers of all the saints, must nevertheless be accounted the vicar of Christ, the successor of Peter, the chief prelate

(*b*) 2 Thess. ii. 7.

of the Church, merely because he occupies what was anciently the first see, is a thing extremely ridiculous and absurd. I forbear to remark the immense difference between the pope's chancery, and a well regulated administration of the Church; though this one thing is sufficient to remove every difficulty on this subject. For no man in his sound senses will include the episcopal office in lead and in bulls, much less in that school of frauds and chicaneries, in which the pope's spiritual government consists. It has justly been remarked, therefore, that the Roman Church which is boasted of, has long ago been converted into a secular court, which is all that is now to be seen at Rome. Nor am I here accusing the vices of individuals, but proving that the papacy itself is diametrically opposite to the legitimate order of the Church.

XXVII. But if we proceed to persons, it is well known what kind of men we shall find sustaining the character of vicars of Christ. Julius, and Leo, and Clement, and Paul, will be pillars of the christian faith, and the principal oracles of religion, who never knew any thing of Christ, except what they had learned in the school of Lucian. But why do I enumerate three or four pontiffs, as though it were doubtful what kind of religion the pontiffs and the whole college of cardinals have professed long ago, and profess in the present day? For of the secret theology which prevails among them, the first article is, that there is no God; the second, that all that is written and preached concerning Jesus Christ is falsehood and imposture; the third, that the doctrine of a future life, and that of the final resurrection, are mere fables. This opinion, I confess, is not entertained by all, and is expressed by few of them; yet it long ago began to be the ordinary religion of the pontiffs. Though this is notorious to all who are acquainted with Rome, yet the Roman theologians persist in boasting that the possibility of error in the pope has been prevented by the privilege of Christ, because he said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (c) What can they gain by such impudent mockery, except it be to convince the whole world of their having arrived at such an

(c) Luke xxii. 32.

extreme of presumption, that they neither fear God nor regard men?

XXVIII. But let us suppose the impiety of those pontiffs, whom I have mentioned, to be concealed, because they have not published it by sermons or by writings, but only betrayed it in their chambers and at their tables, or at least within the walls of their palaces. But if they wish to establish this privilege to which they pretend, they must expunge from the number of the pontiffs John the Twenty-second, who publicly maintained that souls are mortal, and that they perish together with the bodies till the day of resurrection. And to shew that the whole see, with its principal pillars, was then entirely overturned, not one of the cardinals resisted this capital error, but the university of Paris urged the king of France to compel the pope to a retractation. The king interdicted his subjects from all communion with him, unless he should speedily repent; and he caused this to be proclaimed in the usual manner by a herald. Compelled by necessity, the pontiff abjured his error. This example renders it unnecessary for me to dispute any longer against the assertion of our adversaries, that the see of Rome and its pontiffs cannot err respecting the faith, because Christ said to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." John certainly fell from the true faith in such a disgraceful manner, as to furnish to posterity a signal proof, that those who succeed Peter in his bishopric are not all Peters. The argument itself, however, is too puerile to need any answer. For if they are determined to apply to Peter's successors every thing that was said to Peter, it will follow that they are all Satans, because the Lord also said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me." (d) It will be as easy for us to retort this passage against them, as it is for them to object the other against us.

XXIX. But it affords me no pleasure to contend with them in such fooleries, and therefore I return from the digression. To confine Christ and the Holy Spirit and the Church to one particular place, so that whoever presides

(d) Matt. xvi 23.



there, even though he be a devil, must nevertheless be deemed the vicar of Christ, and the head of the Church, because that place was formerly the see of Peter, I maintain to be not only impious and dishonourable to Christ, but altogether absurd and repugnant to common sense. The Roman pontiffs for a long time have either been totally indifferent to religion, or have shewn themselves its greatest enemies. They are no more made the vicars of Christ, therefore, by the see which they occupy, than an idol is to be taken for God, because it is placed in his temple. Now if a judgment is to be formed on their conduct, let the pontiffs answer for themselves in what part of it they can at all be recognized as bishops. In the first place, the mode of life generally pursued at Rome, not only without any opposition from them, but with their connivance and even tacit approbation, is altogether disgraceful to bishops, whose duty it is to restrain the licentiousness of the people by a rigid discipline. Yet I will not, however, be so severe against them as to charge them with the faults of other persons. But while both themselves and their families, with almost the whole college of cardinals, and the whole host of their clergy, are so abandoned to all kinds of debauchery, impurity, and obscenity, and to every species of enormity and crime, that they resemble monsters rather than men, they prove themselves to have no just claim to the character of bishops.—They need not be afraid, however, that I shall proceed to a further disclosure of their turpitude. For it is unpleasant to meddle with such abominable pollution, and it is necessary to spare chaste ears. Besides, I conceive, I have more than sufficiently proved what I intended, that even if Rome had anciently been the head of all Churches, yet at the present day she is not worthy of being accounted one of the smallest toes of the Church's feet.

XXX. With respect to the cardinals, as they are called, I know not how it has come to pass that they have so suddenly risen to such high dignity. In the time of Gregory, this title was exclusively applied to bishops; for whenever he mentions cardinals, he speaks of them not only as belonging to the Church of Rome, but to any other

Churches; so that in short a cardinal priest is no other than a bishop. I find no such title at all in the writers of any preceding age; and at that time I observe they were far inferior to bishops, to whom they are now so far superior.—This passage of Augustine is well known; “Though according to the titles of honour which have long been used in the Church, a bishop is superior to a presbyter, yet Augustine is in many things inferior to Jerome.” He clearly makes not the least distinction between a presbyter of the Roman Church and those of other Churches, but places them all alike below the bishops. And this order was so long observed, that in the council of Carthage, when two legates attended from the Roman see, one a bishop, the other a presbyter, the presbyter was obliged to take the lowest seat. But not to go too far into antiquity for examples, we have the acts of a council held under Gregory at Rome, at which the presbyters sat in the lowest place, and subscribed separately; and the deacons were not allowed to subscribe at all. And indeed the priests had no other office at that time, than to attend and assist the bishop in the ministry of the word, and the administration of the sacraments. Now their condition is so changed, that they are become the cousins of kings and emperors. And there is no doubt but they rose by degrees, together with their head, till they reached their present high dignity. This also I have thought proper to suggest by the way in a few words, that the reader may more fully understand, that the Roman see in its present circumstances is widely different from its ancient state, under the pretext of which it is now maintained and defended.—But whatever they may have been in former times, since they have now no true and legitimate office in the Church, and only retain a mere name and useless mask of one, and since every thing belonging to them is quite contrary to it, it was necessary that what Gregory often forebodes should actually befall them: “I say it with tears, I denounce it with groans, that since the sacerdotal order is fallen within, it will not long be able stand without.” Or rather it was necessary that what Malachi declares of similar characters should be fulfilled in them: “Ye are departed out of the

way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.—Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people.” (e) I now leave it to all pious persons to consider the nature of the lofty fabric of the Roman hierarchy, to which the papists with nefarious impudence, and without any hesitation, sacrifice even the word of God itself, which ought to have been held venerable and sacred by heaven and earth, by men and angels.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*The Power of the Church respecting Articles of Faith, and its licentious Perversion under the Papacy to the Corruption of all Purity of Doctrine.*

**T**HE next subject is the power of the Church, which is to be considered as residing, partly in the respective bishops, partly in councils, and those either provincial or general.—I speak only of the spiritual power which belongs to the Church. Now it consists either in doctrine, in legislation, or jurisdiction. The subject of doctrine contains two parts, the authority to establish doctrines, and the explication of them. Before we enter on the particular discussion of each of these points, we would apprise the pious readers, that whatever is asserted respecting the power of the Church, they should be mindful to refer to the end for which Paul declares it to have been given, namely, “to edification and not to destruction:” (f) and all who make a legitimate use of it, consider themselves as nothing more than “servants of Christ,” (g) and the people’s “servants for Jesus’ sake.” (h) Now the only way to edify the Church is, for the ministers themselves to study to preserve to Jesus Christ his rightful authority, which can no longer be secure than while he is left

(e) Mal. ii. 8, 9.

(f) 2 Cor. x. 8. xiii. 10.

(g) Phil. i. 1.

(h) 2 Cor. iv. 5.



in possession of what he has received from the Father, that is, to be the sole Master in the Church. (i) For of him alone, and of no other is it said, "Hear ye him." (k) The power of the Church, therefore, is not to be depreciated, yet it must be circumscribed by certain limits, that it may not be extended in every direction according to the caprice of men.—It will, therefore, be highly useful to observe how it is described by the prophets and apostles. For if we simply grant to men the power which they may be pleased to assume, it must be obvious to every one, what a door will be opened for tyranny, which ought never to be seen in the Church of Christ.

II. Here, therefore, it is necessary to remember, that whatever authority and dignity is attributed by the Holy Spirit in the Scripture, either to the priests and prophets under the law, or to the apostles and their successors, it is all given, not in a strict sense to the persons themselves, but to the ministry over which they were appointed, or to speak more correctly, to the word, the ministration of which was committed to them. For if we examine them all in succession, we shall not find that they were invested with any authority to teach or to answer inquiries, but in the name and word of the Lord. For when they were called to their office, it was at the same time enjoined that they should bring forward nothing of themselves, but should speak from the mouth of the Lord. Nor did he send them forth in public to address the people, before he had instructed them what they should say, that they might speak nothing beside his word. Moses himself, the prince of all the prophets, was to be heard above all others, but he was first furnished with his commission, that he might not be able to announce any thing except from the Lord. Therefore the people, when they received his doctrine, were said to "believe the Lord and his servant Moses." (l) The authority of the priests also, that it might not fall into contempt, was confirmed by the severest punishments. (m) But on the other hand, the Lord shews on what condition they were to be heard, when he says, "My covenant

(i) Matt. xxiii. 8. (k) Matt. xvii. 5. (l) Exod. xiv. 31. (m) Deut. xvii. 8—12.

was with Levi. The law of truth was in his mouth."— And just afterwards, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." (*n*) Therefore, if a priest would be heard, it was necessary for him to prove himself the messenger of God, by faithfully communicating the commands which he had received from his master: and where attention to the priests is enjoined, it is expressly stated, that "they shall teach the sentence of the law" (*o*) of God.

III. The power of the prophets is fully and beautifully described in Ezekiel. "Son of man," says the Lord, "I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore, hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." (*p*) When he is commanded to hear from the mouth of the Lord, is he not prohibited to invent any thing of himself? And what is it, to give warning from the Lord, but to speak in such a manner as to be able to declare with confidence, that the message he has brought is not his own, but the Lord's? The Lord expresses the same thing in other words in the prophecy of Jeremiah; "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully." (*q*) He clearly delivers a law for them all; its import is, that he permits no one to teach more than he has been commanded; and he immediately gives the appellation of "chaff" to every thing that has not proceeded from himself alone. Not one of the prophets opened his mouth, therefore, without having first received the words from the Lord. Hence their frequent use of these expressions, "The word of the Lord," "The burden of the Lord," "Thus saith the Lord," "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken:" and this was highly necessary; for Isaiah exclaimed, "I am a man of unclean lips;" (*r*) and Jeremiah said, "Behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child." (*s*) What could proceed from the pollution of the one, and the folly of the other, but impure and foolish speeches, if they had spoken their own words? But their lips were holy and pure, when

(*n*) Mal. ii. 4—7.(*o*) Deut. xvii. 11.(*p*) Ezek. iii. 17.(*q*) Jer. xxiii. 28,(*r*) Isaiah vi. 5,(*s*) Jer. i. 6.

they began to be the organs of the Holy Spirit. While the prophets were bound by this law, to deliver nothing but what they had received, they were likewise adorned with eminent power and splendid titles. For when the Lord declares, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant," he at the same time assigns the reason, "Behold I have put my words in thy mouth. (*t*)

IV. If we advert to the apostles, they are certainly honoured with many extraordinary characters—it is said, that they are "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth;" (*v*) that "he that heareth" them, "heareth Christ;" (*w*) that "whatsoever" they "shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever" they "shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." (*x*) But their very name shews what degree of liberty they were allowed in their office; that if they were apostles, they were not to declaim according to their own pleasure, but to deliver with strict fidelity the commands of him who had sent them. And the language of Christ is sufficiently clear, in which he has defined their message by the following commission: "Go ye, and teach all nations whatsoever I have commanded you." (*y*) He had even received and imposed on himself the same law, in order that no one might refuse to submit to it. "My doctrine," says he, "is not mine, but his that sent me." (*z*) He who was always the eternal and only counsellor of the Father, and was constituted by the Father the Lord and Master of all, yet because he sustained the office of a teacher, prescribed, by his own example, the rule which all ministers ought to follow in their teaching. The power of the Church, therefore, is not unlimited, but subject to the word of the Lord, and as it were included in it.

V. But whereas it has been a principle received in the Church from the beginning, and ought to be admitted in the present day, that the servants of God should teach nothing

(*t*) Jer. i. 9, 10.(*v*) Matt. v. 13, 14.(*w*) Luke x. 16.(*x*) Matt. xviii. 18.(*y*) Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.(*z*) John vii. 16.



which they have not learned from him, yet they have had different modes of receiving instruction from him according to the variety of different periods; and the present mode differs from those which have preceded it. In the first place, if the assertion of Christ be true, that "no man knoweth the Father, except the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;" (a) it must always have been necessary for those who would arrive at the knowledge of God, to be directed by that eternal wisdom. For how could they have comprehended the mysteries of God, or how could they have declared them, except by the teaching of him, to whom alone the secrets of the Father are intimately known? The saints in former ages, therefore, had no other knowledge of God than what they obtained by beholding him in the Son, as in a mirror. By this observation I mean, that God never manifested himself to man in any other way than by his Son, his only wisdom, light, and truth. From this fountain Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others, drew all the knowledge which they possessed of heavenly doctrine: from this fountain the prophets themselves drew all the celestial oracles which they spoke and wrote. But this wisdom has not always manifested itself in the same way. With the patriarchs God employed secret revelations; for the confirmation of which, however, he at the same time added such signs that they could not entertain the least doubt that it was God who spake to them. What the patriarchs had received, they transmitted from hand to hand to their posterity; for the Lord had committed it to them on the express condition that they should so propagate it. Succeeding generations, from the testimony of God in their hearts, knew that what they heard was from heaven, and not from the earth.

VI. But when it pleased God to raise up a more visible form of a Church, it was his will that his word should be committed to writing, in order that the priests might derive from it whatever they would communicate to the people, and that all the doctrine which should be delivered might be examined by that rule. Therefore after the promulgation of

(a) Matt. xi, 27.

the law, when the priests were commanded to teach "out of the mouth of the Lord," the meaning is, that they should teach nothing extraneous or different from that system of doctrine which the Lord had comprised in the law; it was not lawful for them to add to it, or to diminish from it. Afterwards followed the prophets, by whom God published new oracles which were to be added to the law; yet they were not so new, but that they proceeded from the law and bore a relation to it. For in regard to doctrine, the prophets were merely interpreters of the law, and added nothing to it, except prophecies of things to come. Except these, they brought forward nothing but pure explication of the law.—But because it pleased God, that there should be a more evident and copious doctrine, for the better satisfaction of weak consciences, he directed the prophecies also to be committed to writing, and to be accounted a part of his word.—To these likewise were added the histories, which were the productions of the prophets, but composed under the dictation of the Holy Spirit. I class the Psalms with the prophecies, because what we attribute to the prophecies is common to the Psalms. That whole body of Scripture, therefore, consisting of the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Histories, was the word of God to the ancient Church, and to this standard the priests and teachers, even to the coming of Christ, were bound to conform their doctrine; nor was it lawful for them to deviate either to the right hand or to the left, because their office was wholly confined within these limits, that they should answer the people from the mouth of God. And this may be inferred from that remarkable passage of Malachi, where he commands the Jews to remember the law, and to be attentive to it, even till the publication of the Gospel. (*b*) For in that injunction he drives them off from all adventitious doctrines, and prohibits even the smallest deviation from the path which Moses had faithfully shewed them. And it is for this reason that David so magnifies the excellence of the law, and recounts so many of its praises; to prevent the Jews from desiring any addition

(*b*) Mal. iv. 4.

to it, since it contained every thing necessary for them to know.

VII. But when at length the wisdom of God was manifested in the flesh, it openly declared to us all that the human mind is capable of comprehending, or ought to think concerning the heavenly Father. Now, therefore, since Christ, the Sun of righteousness, has shone upon us, we enjoy the full splendour of Divine truth, resembling the brightness of noon-day, whereas the light enjoyed before was a kind of twilight. For certainly the apostle intended to state no unimportant fact, when he said, that "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son;" (c) for he here suggests, and even plainly declares, that God will not in future, as in ages past, speak from time to time by one and another, that he will not add prophecies to prophecies, or revelations to revelations, but that he hath completed all the branches of instruction in his Son, so that this is the last and eternal testimony that we shall have from him. For which reason this whole period of the New Testament, from the appearance of Christ to us in the first promulgation of his gospel, even to the day of judgment, is designated as "the last time," "the last times," "the last days;" in order that, being content with the perfection of the doctrine of Christ, we may learn, neither to invent any thing new or beyond it ourselves, nor to receive any such thing from the invention of others. It is not without cause, therefore, that the Father hath given us his Son by a peculiar privilege, and appointed him to be our teacher, commanding attention to be paid to him, and not to any mere man. He hath recommended his tuition to us in few words, when he says, "Hear ye him;" (d) but there is more weight and energy in them than is commonly imagined; for they call us away from all the instructions of men, and place us before him alone; they command us to learn from him alone all the doctrine of salvation, to depend upon him, to adhere to him, in short, as the words express, to listen solely to his voice.

(c) Heb. i. 1, 2.

(d) Matt. xvii. 5.



And indeed what ought now to be either expected or desired from man, when the Word of life himself has familiarly presented himself before us? It is rather necessary that all the mouths of men should be shut, since he has once spoken, in whom it has pleased the heavenly Father that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge should be hidden, *(e)* and has spoken in a manner becoming the wisdom of God, in whom there is no imperfection, and the Messiah who was expected to reveal all things; *(f)* who has spoken in such a manner as to leave nothing to be said by others after him.

VIII. Let us lay down this then as an undoubted axiom, That nothing ought to be admitted in the Church as the word of God, but what is contained first in the law and the prophets, and secondly in the writings of the apostles, and that there is no other method of teaching aright in the Church than according to the direction and standard of that word. Hence we conclude also, that the apostles were allowed no more discretion than the prophets before them; namely, to expound the ancient Scripture, and to shew that the things delivered in it were accomplished in Christ; but this they were only to do from the Lord, that is to say, under the guidance and dictation of the Spirit of Christ. For Christ limited their mission by this condition, when he ordered them to go and teach, not the fabrications of their own presumption, but whatsoever he had commanded them. *(g)* And nothing could be more explicit than what he said on another occasion: "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ." *(h)* To fix this more deeply in their minds, he repeats it twice in the same place. And because their weakness was such that they were unable to comprehend the things which they had heard and learned from the lips of their Master, the Spirit of truth was promised to them, to lead them into the true understanding of all things. *(i)* For that restriction is to be attentively remarked, which assigns to the Holy Spirit the office of suggesting to their minds all that Christ had before taught them with his mouth.

*(e)* Col. i. 19. ii. 3.      *(f)* John iv. 25.      *(g)* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.  
*(h)* Matt. xxiii. 8, 10.      *(i)* John xiv. 26. xvi. 13.

IX. Therefore Peter, who had been fully taught by his Master how far his office extended, represents nothing as left for himself or others, but to dispense the doctrine committed to them by God. "If any man speak," says he, "let him speak as the oracles of God:" (*k*) that is, not with hesitation or uncertainty, like persons conscious of no sufficient authority, but with the noble confidence which becomes a servant of God furnished with his certain commission. What is this but rejecting all the inventions of the human mind, from whatever head they may proceed, in order that the pure word of God may be taught and learned in the Church of the faithful? What is this but removing all the decrees or rather inventions of men, whatever be their station, that the ordinances of God alone may be observed? These are the spiritual "weapons, mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds," by which the faithful soldiers of God "cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (*l*) This is the extent of the power with which the pastors of the Church, by whatever name they may be distinguished, ought to be invested;—that by the word of God they may venture to do all things with confidence; may constrain all the strength, glory, wisdom, and pride of the world to obey and submit to his majesty; supported by his power, may govern all mankind, from the highest to the lowest; may build up the house of Christ, and subvert the house of Satan; may feed the sheep, and drive away the wolves; may instruct and exhort the docile; may reprove, rebuke, and restrain the rebellious and obstinate; may bind and loose; may discharge their lightnings and thunders, if necessary; but all in the word of God. Between the apostles and their successors, however, there is, as I have stated, this difference; that the apostles were the certain and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit, and therefore their writings are to be received as the oracles of God; but succeeding ministers have no other office than to teach what is revealed and recorded in

(*k*) 1 Peter iv. 11.(*l*) 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

the sacred Scriptures. We conclude then, that it is not now left to faithful ministers to frame any new doctrine, but that it behoves them simply to adhere to the doctrine to which God hath made all subject, without any exception. In making this observation, my design is to shew, not only what is lawful to individuals, but also to the universal Church. With respect to particular persons, Paul had certainly been appointed by the Lord an apostle to the Corinthians; yet he denies that he had any dominion over their faith. (*m*) Who can now dare to arrogate to himself a dominion which Paul testifies did not belong to him? If he had sanctioned such a licence, that whatever the pastor delivered, he might require, as a matter of right, that the same should be implicitly believed, he would never have recommended to the same Corinthians such a regulation as this: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." (*n*) For here he exempted none, but made the authority of every one subject to the control of the word of God. But the case of the universal Church, it will be said, is different. I reply; Paul has obviated this objection in another place, when he says, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (*o*) But if it be the word of God alone, upon which faith is suspended, towards which it looks, and on which it relies, I ask, what is there left for the word of the whole world? Here it will be impossible for any man to hesitate, who has really known what faith is. For it ought to rest on such firm ground as to stand invincible and undismayed in opposition to Satan, to all the machinations of hell, and to all the assaults of the world. This stability we shall only find in the word of God alone. Besides, the reason which we are here required to consider, is of universal application; that God denies to man the right of promulgating any new article of faith, in order that he alone may be our master in spiritual doctrine, as he alone is true beyond all possibility of deceiving or being deceived. This reason is no less applicable to the whole Church than to every individual believer.

(*m*) 2 Cor. i. 24.(*n*) 1 Cor. xiv. 29, 30.(*o*) Rom. x. 17.



X. But if this power, which we have shewn to belong to the Church, be compared with that which has now for some ages past been claimed over the people of God, by the spiritual tyrants who have falsely called themselves bishops and prelates of religion, there will be no more resemblance than there is between Christ and Belial. It is not my intention here to expose the shameful methods in which they have exercised their tyranny; I shall only state the doctrine, which they defend in the present age, not only by their writings, but also by fire and sword. As they take it for granted that an universal council is the true representative of the Church; having assumed this principle, they at once determine, as beyond all doubt, that such councils are under the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit, and therefore cannot err. Now as they themselves influence the councils, and even constitute them, the fact is, that they assume to themselves all that they contend for as belonging to the councils. They wish our faith, therefore, to stand or fall at their pleasure, that whatever they may have determined on one side or the other, may be implicitly received by our minds as fully decided; so that if they approve of any thing, we must approve of the same without any hesitation; and if they condemn any thing, we must unite in the condemnation of it. At the same time, according to their own caprice, and in contempt of the word of God, they fabricate doctrines which, for no other reason than this, they require to be believed. For they acknowledge no man as a Christian, who does not fully assent to all their dogmas, affirmative as well as negative, if not with an explicit, at least with an implicit faith, because they pretend that the Church has authority to make new articles of faith.

XI. First let us hear by what arguments they prove this authority to have been given to the Church; and then we shall see how far their allegations respecting the Church contributes to support their cause. The Church, they say, has excellent promises, that she is never to be forsaken by Christ her spouse, but will be led by his Spirit into all truth. (p)

But of the promises which they are accustomed to allege, many are given no less to each of the faithful in particular, than collectively to the whole Church. For though the Lord was addressing the twelve apostles, when he said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" (q) and, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth;" (r) he made these promises, not only to the apostles considered as a body, but to every one of the number, and even to the other disciples whom he had already received, or who were afterwards to be added to them. Now when they interpret these promises, replete with peculiar consolation, in such a sense as if they were given to no individual christian, but only to the whole Church collectively, what is this but depriving all christians of the confidence with which such promises ought to animate them? Here I do not deny that the whole society of the faithful, being adorned with a manifold variety of gifts, possesses a more ample and precious treasure of heavenly wisdom, than each particular individual; nor do I intend that these things are spoken of the faithful in common, as if they were all equally endued with the spirit of understanding and doctrine; but we must not allow the adversaries of Christ, in defence of a bad cause, to wrest the Scripture to a sense which it was not intended to convey. Leaving this remark, I freely acknowledge that the Lord is continually present with his servants, and that he guides them by his Spirit; that this is not a spirit of error, ignorance, falsehood, or darkness, but "the spirit of wisdom, and revelation, and truth," from whom they may certainly learn "the things that are given to" them "of God," or in other words, "may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (s) But as it is nothing more than the first-fruits, a kind of foretaste of that Spirit, that is enjoyed by the faithful in the present state, even by those of them who are favoured with more excellent graces than others, there remains no-

(q) Matt. xxviii. 20.

(r) John xiv. 16, 17.

(s) Ephes. i. 17, 18. John xiv. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 12.

thing for them, but that, conscious of their imbecility, they solicitously confine themselves within the limits of the word of God; lest, if they proceed far by their own sense, they should wander from the right way, in consequence of being not yet fully enlightened by that Spirit, by whose teaching alone truth is distinguished from falsehood. For all confess with Paul, that they have not yet attained the mark; therefore, they rather press on towards daily improvement than boast of perfection. (*t*)

XII. But they will object, that whatever is partially attributed to every one of the saints, completely and perfectly belongs to the whole Church. Notwithstanding the plausibility of this position, yet I deny it to be true. I admit that God distributes the gifts of his Spirit by measure to every member of his Church, in such a manner that nothing necessary is wanting to the whole body, when those gifts are bestowed in common. But the riches of the Church are always such, as to be very far from that consummate perfection boasted by our adversaries. Yet the Church is not left destitute in any respect, but that it always has what is sufficient; for the Lord knows what its necessity requires. But to restrain it within the bounds of humility and pious modesty he bestows no more than he sees to be expedient. Here, I know, they are accustomed to object, that the Church has been “cleansed by the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish;” (*v*) and that for this reason it is called “the pillar and ground of the truth.” (*u*) But the former of these passages rather indicates what Christ is daily performing in his Church, than any thing that he has already accomplished. For if he is daily sanctifying, purifying, polishing, and cleansing his people, it must be evident, that they still have some spots and wrinkles, and that something is still wanting to their sanctification. How vain and visionary is it to imagine the Church already perfectly holy and immaculate, while all its members are the subjects of cor-

(*t*) Phil. iii. 12—14.(*v*) Ephes. v. 26, 27.(*u*) 1 Tim. iii. 15.



ruption and impurity! It is true that the Church is sanctified by Christ, but it is only the commencement of their sanctification, that is seen in the present state; the end and perfect completion of it will be, when Christ, the Holy of holies, shall fill it truly and entirely with his holiness. It is likewise true, that its spots and wrinkles are effaced, but in such a manner that they are in a daily course of obliteration, till Christ at his coming shall entirely efface all that remains. For unless we admit this, we must of necessity assert, with the Pelagians, that the righteousness of the faithful is perfect in the present life, and with the Cathari and Donatists, must allow no infirmity in the Church. The other passage, as we have already seen, has a meaning totally different from what they pretend. For after Paul had instructed Timothy in the true nature of the office of a bishop, he says, "These things I write unto thee, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God:" and to enforce his conscientious attention to this object, he adds, that the Church itself is "the pillar and ground of the truth." (w) Now what is the meaning of this expression, but that the truth of God is preserved in the Church, and that by the ministry of preaching? As in another place he states, that Christ "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, that we be no more carried about with every wind of doctrine," or deluded by men, but that being enlightened with the true knowledge of the Son of God, we may "all come into the unity of the faith." (x) The preservation of the truth, therefore, from being extinguished in the world, is in consequence of the Church being its faithful guardian, by whose efforts and ministry it is maintained. But if this guardianship consists in the ministry of the prophets and apostles, it follows that it wholly depends on the faithful preservation of the purity of the word of God.

XIII. And that the readers may better understand upon what point this question principally turns, I will briefly state what our adversaries require, and wherein we oppose them.

(w) 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

(x) Ephes. iv. 11, 13, 14.

When they assert that the Church cannot err, their meaning is, as they themselves explain it, That as it is governed by the Spirit of God, it may safely proceed without the word; that whithersoever it goes, it can neither think nor speak any thing that is not true; and, therefore, that if it determine any thing beyond or beside the Divine word, the same is to be considered in no other light than as a certain oracle of God. If we grant the first point, that the Church cannot err in things essential to salvation, our meaning is, that its security from error is owing to its renouncing all its own wisdom, and submitting itself to the Holy Spirit to be taught by means of the word of God. This then is the difference between us. They ascribe to the Church an authority independent of the word; we maintain it to be annexed to the word, and inseparable from it. And what is there surprising, that the spouse and disciple of Christ is subject to her Lord and master, so as to be assiduously and sedulously awaiting his commands and instructions? For it is the order of a well-regulated family, for the wife to obey the command of the husband; it is the order of a well-disciplined school, that nothing be heard there but the instructions of the master. Wherefore let not the Church be wise of itself, nor think any thing of itself, but let it fix the boundary of its wisdom where Christ has made an end of speaking. In this manner it will distrust all the inventions of its own reason, but in those things in which it is supported by the word of God, it will not waver with any suspicion or hesitation, but will rest upon it with strong certainty and unshaken constancy. Thus confiding in the amplitude of the promises it has received, it will have an excellent support for its faith, so that it cannot doubt that the Holy Spirit, the best guide in the right way, is always present with it, but at the same time it will remember what advantage the Lord intends should be received from his Spirit. "The Spirit," says he, "whom I will send from the Father, will guide you into all truth." But how will this be done? Christ says, "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (y) He announces, therefore, that nothing more is

(y) John xiv. 26. xv. 26. xvi. 13.

to be expected from his Spirit, than that he will enlighten our minds to discover the truth of his doctrine. Wherefore it is very judiciously observed by Chrysostom, that "many boast of the Holy Spirit, but in those, who speak from themselves, this is a false pretence. As Christ testified that he spake not of himself, because he spake from the law and the prophets; so, if under the name of the Spirit, any thing be obtruded that is not contained in the Gospel, let us not believe it. For as Christ is the accomplishment of the law and the prophets, so is the Spirit, of the Gospel." These are the words of Chrysostom. Now it is easy to infer how great is the error of our adversaries, who boast of the Holy Spirit for no other purpose than to recommend, under his name, doctrines strange and inconsistent with the word of God, whereas it is his determination to be connected with the word by an indissoluble bond, and this was declared by Christ when he promised him to his Church. And so he is in point of fact. The sobriety which the Lord hath once prescribed to his Church, he will have to be perpetually observed; and he hath forbidden the Church to add any thing to his word, or to diminish any thing from it. This is the inviolable decree of God and of the Holy Spirit, which our adversaries endeavour to abrogate, when they pretend that the Church is governed by the Spirit without the word.

XIV. Here again they cavil, that it was necessary for the Church to add some things to the writings of the apostles, or at least for the apostles themselves afterwards to supply in their discourses, what they had not so explicitly delivered in their writings, because Christ declared to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now;" (z) and that these are the ordinances which have been received as usages and customs without the scripture. But what effrontery is here betrayed! I confess that the disciples were ignorant, and not very docile, when the Lord made this declaration to them; but they were not so stupid, when they committed their doctrine to writing, as to render it necessary for them afterwards to supply in their discourses what they had from ignorance omitted in their writings.



But if, when they published their writings, they had already been led by the Spirit into all truth, what hindered them from comprising and leaving on record in those writings a perfect system of evangelical doctrine? Let us grant our opponents, however, what they ask; only let them enumerate those things which required to be revealed, and are not contained in the apostolical writings. If they dare to attempt this, I will reply in the words of Augustine, "Where the Lord has been silent, which of us can say, These things or those are intended; and if he dare to say so, how will he prove it?" But why do I contend a point that is unnecessary? For even children know that the apostolic writings, which these men represent as incomplete and essentially deficient, contain the fruit of that revelation which the Lord then promised them.

XV. What, say they, did not Christ place the doctrines and decrees of the Church beyond all controversy, when he commanded him who should dare to contradict it, to be regarded "as a heathen man and a publican?" (a) In the first place, Christ in that text makes no mention of doctrine, but only asserts the authority of the Church in pronouncing censures for the correction of vices, in order that its judgment may not be opposed by any who are admonished or reproved. But leaving this remark, it is astonishing, that they have no more modesty than to presume to boast of that passage. For what will they extort from it, but that it is unlawful to despise the consent of the Church, which never consents to any thing except the truth of the word of God? The Church is to be heard, they say. Who denies it? For it pronounces nothing but from the word of the Lord. If they require any thing further, let them know that these words of Christ afford them no support. Nor ought it to be esteemed too contentious in me to insist so strenuously on this point, That it is not lawful for the Church to invent any new doctrine, or to teach and deliver, as of Divine authority, any thing more than the Lord hath revealed in his word. All persons of sound judgment perceive how exceedingly dan-

(a) Matt. xviii. 17.

gerous it would be if so much power were once granted to any man. For they see how wide a door is opened to the scoffs and cavils of the impious, if we assert that the decisions of men are to be received by christians as articles of faith. It is also to be remarked, that Christ spoke according to the established order of his own time, and gave this name to the Sanhedrim, that his disciples might learn afterwards to reverence the solemn assemblies of the Church. And thus, on the principle of our adversaries, every city and village would have an equal liberty to frame new articles of faith.

XVI. The examples which they allege are nothing to the purpose. They say that the baptism of infants arose, not so much from any express command of scripture, as from the decree of the Church. It would be a most miserable asylum, if in defence of infant baptism, we were compelled to have recourse to the mere authority of the Church; but it will be shewn in another place, that the fact is very different. So when they object, that the Scriptures no where affirm what was pronounced in the council of Nice, that the Son is of the same substance with the Father, they do great injury to the Fathers of that council, as if they had presumptuously condemned Arius for having refused to subscribe to their language, while he professed all the doctrine which is contained in the writings of the prophets and apostles. The word *consubstantial* (*ὁμοουσιος*) I confess, is not to be found in the scripture; but while on the one hand it is so often affirmed that there is but one God, and on the other Christ is so frequently called the true and eternal God, one with the Father, what have the Nicene Fathers done, but simply expressed the natural sense of the scripture, in declaring the Father and the Son to be of one and the same substance? And Theodoret the historian states, that Constantine the emperor opened that council with the following preliminary address: "In disputes on divine subjects we are to adhere to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; the books of the evangelists and apostles, with the oracles of the prophets, fully reveal to us the will of God. Wherefore, laying aside all discord, let us take the decision of all questions in debate from the words of the Spirit." There was no one at that time who opposed these

holy admonitions. No one objected, that the Church might add something of its own, that the Spirit had not revealed every thing to the apostles, or at least, that they had not transmitted the whole to posterity in writing, or any thing of the like nature. If what our adversaries contend for be true, in the first place, Constantine acted unjustly in depriving the Church of its power; and in the next place, when none of the bishops rose to vindicate that power, their silence was not to be excused from treachery, for on that occasion they must have betrayed the rights of the Church. But from the statement of Theodoret, that they readily received what was said by the emperor, it is evident that this novel dogma of our adversaries was at that time altogether unknown.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### *Councils ; their Authority.*

**T**HOUGH I should concede to our adversaries all the claims which they set up on behalf of the Church, yet this would effect but little towards the attainment of their object. For whatever is said respecting the Church, they immediately transfer to the councils, which they consider as representing the Church; and it may further be affirmed, that their violent contentions for the power of the Church, is with no other view than to ascribe all that they can extort to the Roman pontiff and his satellites. Before I enter on the discussion of this question, it is necessary for me to premise two brief observations. First, if in this chapter I am rather severe on our opponents, it is not that I would shew the ancient councils less honour than they deserve. I venerate them from my heart, and wish them to receive from all men the honour to which they are entitled; but here some limits must be observed, that we may derogate nothing from Christ. Now it is the prerogative of Christ, to preside over all councils, and to have no mortal man associated with him in



that dignity. But I maintain, that he really presides only where he governs the whole assembly by his word and Spirit. Secondly, when I attribute to the councils less than our adversaries require, I am not induced to do this, from any fear that the councils would favour their cause and oppose ours. For as we are sufficiently armed by the word of the Lord, and need not seek any further assistance for the complete establishment of our doctrine, and the total subversion of popery, so on the other hand, if it were necessary, the ancient councils would furnish us in a great measure with sufficient arguments for both these objects.

II. Let us now come to the subject itself. If it be inquired what is the authority of councils according to the scriptures, there is no promise more ample or explicit than this declaration of Christ: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (*b*) But this belongs no less to every particular congregation than to a general council. The main stress of the question, however, does not lie in this, but in the annexed condition, that Christ will be in the midst of a council, then and then only, when it is assembled in his name. Wherefore, though our adversaries mention councils of bishops a thousand times, they will gain but little ground; nor will they prevail upon us to believe what they pretend, that such councils are directed by the Holy Spirit, till it shall have been proved, that they are assembled in the name of Christ. For it is equally as possible for impious and unfaithful bishops to conspire against Christ, as for pious and upright bishops to assemble together in his name. Of this we have ample proof in numerous decrees which have been issued by such councils; as will be seen in the course of this discussion. At present I only reply in one word, that the promise of Christ is exclusively restricted to those who "are gathered together in his name." Let us, therefore, define wherein this consists. I deny that they are assembled in the name of Christ, who, rejecting the command of God, which prohibits any diminution of his word, or the smallest addition to it, (*c*) determine

(*b*) Matt. xviii. 20,

(*c*) Deut. iv. 2. Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

every thing according to their own pleasure ; who, not content with the oracles of the scripture, which constitute the only rule of perfect wisdom, invent something new out of their own heads. Since Christ has not promised to be present in all councils, but has added a particular mark to discriminate true and legitimate councils from others, it certainly behoves us by no means to neglect this distinction. This was the covenant which God anciently made with the levitical priests, that they should teach their people from his mouth ; (d) he always required the same of the prophets ; and we see that a similar law was imposed upon the apostles. Those who violate this covenant, God neither dignifies with the honour of the priesthood, nor invests with any authority. Let our adversaries solve this difficulty, if they wish me to submit my faith to the decrees of men, independently of the word of God.

III. For their supposition, that no truth remains in the Church, unless it be found among the pastors, and that the Church itself stands, no longer than it appears in general councils, is very far from having been always correct, if the prophets have left us any authentic records of their times. In the days of Isaiah, there was a Church at Jerusalem, which God had not yet forsaken : nevertheless he speaks of the priests in the following manner : “ His watchmen are blind ; they are all ignorant ; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark ; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber : they are shepherds that cannot understand : they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” (e)—Hosea speaks in a similar manner : “ The watchman of Ephraim was with my God ; but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God.” (f) By thus ironically connecting them with God, he shews that their priesthood was a vain pretence. The Church continued also to the time of Jeremiah. Let us hear what he says of the pastors. “ From the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.” (g) Again, “ The prophets prophesy lies in my name ; I sent them not, neither have I commanded

(d) Mal. ii. 5—7. (e) Isaiah lvi. 10, 11. (f) Hosea ix. 8. (g) Jerem. vi. 13.

them.” (*h*) And to avoid too much prolixity in reciting his words, I would recommend my readers to peruse the whole of the twenty-third and fortieth chapters. Nor were the same persons treated with less severity by Ezekiel: “There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane.—Her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken.” (*i*) Similar complaints abound in all the prophets, so that there is nothing of more frequent recurrence.

IV. But it will be said, though such may have been the case among the Jews, our age is exempt from so great a calamity. I sincerely wish that it were so; but the Holy Spirit hath denounced that the event would be very different. The language of Peter is clear; “There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies.” (*k*) Observe how he declares that danger will arise, not from the common people, but from those who will assume to themselves the name of pastors and teachers. Besides, how often is it predicted by Christ and his apostles, that the greatest dangers would be brought upon the Church by its pastors! (*l*) Paul expressly denounces that Antichrist will “sit in the temple of God;” (*m*) by which he signifies, that the dreadful calamity of which he speaks, will arise from the very persons who will sit as pastors in the Church. And in another place, he shews that the commencement of the mischief was then near at hand. For addressing the bishops of the Church of Ephesus, he says, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock: also of your own selves shall men arise,

(*h*) Jer. xiv. 14.(*i*) Ezek. xxii. 25, 26, 28.(*k*) 2 Peter ii. 1.(*l*) Matt. xxiv. 11, 24.(*m*) 2 Thess. ii. 4.



speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (*n*) If the pastors could so degenerate in a very short space of time, what enormous corruption might be introduced among them in a long series of years! And not to occupy much room with an enumeration, we are taught by the examples of almost all ages, that neither is the truth always maintained in the bosom of the pastors, nor the safety of the Church dependent on their stability. They ought, indeed, to be the guardians and defenders of the peace and safety of the Church, for the preservation of which they are appointed; but it is one thing to perform a duty which we owe, and another, to owe a duty which we do not perform.

V. Let no person conclude from what I have said, that I am inclined on all occasions, and without any discrimination, to weaken the authority of pastors, and bring it into contempt. I only mean to suggest the necessity of discriminating between some pastors and others, that we may not immediately consider persons as pastors because they bear that title. But the pope and all his bishops, for no other reason but because they are called pastors, casting off all obedience to the word of God, disturb and confound every thing at their own pleasure; while they labour to persuade us that it is impossible for them to be destitute of the light of truth, that the Spirit of God perpetually resides in them, and that with them the Church lives and dies. As though the Lord had now no judgments, to inflict upon the world, in the present day, the same kind of punishment with which he once visited the ingratitude of his ancient people; (*o*) namely, to smite the pastors with astonishment, madness, and blindness. And such is their extreme stupidity, they are not aware that they are acting the same part which was acted by those who resisted the word of the Lord in ancient times. For thus the enemies of Jeremiah fortified themselves in opposition to the truth: "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet." (*p*)

(*n*) Acts xx. 29, 30.(*o*) Zech. xii. 4.(*p*) Jer. xviii. 18.

VI. Hence it is easy to reply to another plea in behalf of general councils. That a true Church existed among the Jews in the time of the prophets, cannot be denied. But if a general council of the priests had been convened, what appearance of a Church would such a council have displayed? We hear what God denounces, not against two or three of them, but against the whole body; "The priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder." (*q*) Again, "The law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients." (*r*) Again, "Night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them." (*s*) Now, if these priests and prophets had all been collected together, what spirit would have presided in their assembly? This is remarkably exemplified in the council convoked by Ahab. Four hundred prophets were present. But because they were assembled with no other intention than to flatter that impious monarch, Satan was sent by the Lord to be a lying spirit in all their mouths. (*t*) There the truth was rejected with one consent; Micaiah was condemned as a heretic, beaten, and cast into prison. Jeremiah received the same treatment, and other prophets experienced similar injustice.

VII. But one example, which is more memorable than the rest, may suffice as a specimen of all. In the council which the chief priests and pharisees convened at Jerusalem against Christ, what was there wanting in point of external form? For if there had then been no Church at Jerusalem, Christ would never have united in their sacrifices and other ceremonies. A solemn summons was issued; the high priest presided; all the priests attended; yet there Christ was condemned, and his doctrine rejected. This act proves that the Church was not contained in that council. But, it will be said, there is no danger of such a circumstance happening to us. Who has assured us of this? For to be

(*q*) Jer. iv. 9.

(*s*) Micah iii. 6.

(*r*) Ezek. vii. 26.

(*t*) 1 Kings xxii. 6, 22, 24, 27.

too confident in a matter of such great importance, is culpable stupidity. But while the Spirit has expressly predicted, by the mouth of Paul, that there shall come an apostacy, which cannot take place without the pastors being the first to revolt from God; (v) why do we wilfully shut our eyes to our own ruin? Wherefore it is by no means to be conceded, that the Church consists in the assembly of the pastors, respecting whom God has no where promised that they should always be good, but on the contrary has denounced that they would sometimes be wicked. Now when he warns us of a danger, his design is to make us more cautious.

VIII. What then, it will be said, shall the decisions of councils have no authority? Yes certainly; for I am not contending that all councils ought to be condemned, or that all their acts ought to be rescinded and cancelled at once. Still I shall be told, that I degrade their authority, so as to leave it to the option of every individual to receive or reject whatever a council shall have determined. By no means; but whenever a decree of any council is brought forward, I would wish, first, that a diligent inquiry should be made, at what time, for what cause, and with what design it was held, and what kind of persons were present; secondly, that the subject discussed in it should be examined by the standard of the Scripture; and this in such a manner that the determination should have its weight, and be considered as a precedent or case formerly decided, but that it should not preclude the examination which I have mentioned. I sincerely wish that every person would observe the method recommended by Augustine in his third book against Maximinus. For, with a view to silence the contentions of that heretic respecting the decrees of councils, he says, "I ought not to object to you the council of Nice, nor ought you to object to me the council of Ariminum, to preclude each other's judgment by a previous decision. I am not bound by the authority of the latter, nor you by that of the former. Let cause contend with cause, and argument with argument, on the ground of scriptural authorities, which



exclusively belong to neither party, but are common to both." The consequence of such a mode of proceeding would be, that councils would retain all the majesty which is due to them, while at the same time the Scripture would hold the preeminence, so that every thing would be subject to its standard. Upon this principle, those ancient councils, such as the council of Nice, of Constantinople, the first of Ephesus, that of Chalcedon, and others like them, which were held for the condemnation of errors, we cheerfully receive and reverence as sacred, as far as respects the articles of faith which they have defended; for they contain nothing but the pure and natural interpretation of the Scripture, which the holy Fathers with spiritual prudence applied to the discomfiture of the enemies of religion who arose in those days. In some of the succeeding councils likewise we discover a true zeal for piety, and evident proofs of sense, learning, and prudence. But as the progress of the world is generally from worse to worse, it is easy to see from the more recent councils, how much the Church has gradually degenerated from the purity of that golden age. Even in these more corrupt ages, I doubt not, the councils have been partly composed of some bishops of a better character; but the same observation may be applied to their acts, which was formerly made in a way of complaint against the decrees of the Roman senate, by the senators themselves. Where opinions prevail according to their number, and not according to the weight of argument by which they are supported, the better part of the assembly must of necessity be frequently overcome by the majority. And councils have certainly issued many impious decrees. It is unnecessary here to produce particular examples, as well because this would carry us to too great a length, as because it has already been done by others with a diligence which scarcely admits of any addition.

IX. Now what need is there to enumerate the repugnances between councils and councils, and how decrees passed by one have been rescinded by another? Here it must not be alleged, that where there is such variance between two councils, one or the other is not legitimate. For how shall

we determine this? The only way I know, is to ascertain from the Scriptures that its decrees are not orthodox; for there is no other certain rule of decision. It is now about nine hundred years ago, that the council of Constantinople, assembled under the emperor Leo, decreed that all images placed in churches should be thrown down and broken in pieces. Soon after, the council of Nice, which the empress Irene convened in opposition to the former, decreed that they should be restored. Which of these two shall we acknowledge as a legitimate council? This character has generally been attributed to the latter, which gave images a place in the churches. But Augustine declares that this cannot be done without imminent danger of idolatry. Epiphanius, a more ancient writer, expresses himself in terms of much greater severity; he says that it is abominable wickedness for images to be seen in the temples of christians. Would the Fathers who speak in this manner approve of that council, if they were now living? But if the accounts of historians be true, and credit be given to the acts themselves, that council not only admitted of images, but determined that they were to be worshipped. Now it is evident that such a decree must have originated from Satan. What shall we say to their perversions and mutilations of the Scripture, which demonstrate that they held it all in contempt, as I have already proved? We shall never be able to discriminate between the numerous councils, which dissent from and contradict each other, unless we examine them all by the word of God, which is the universal standard for men and angels. On this ground, we reject the second council of Ephesus, and receive the council of Chalcedon, because the latter council condemned the impiety of Eutyches, which the former had sanctioned. This judgment of the council of Chalcedon was formed from the Scriptures by holy men, whom we imitate in forming our judgment, as the word of God which enlightened them continues to give light to us. Now let the Romanists go and boast, as they are accustomed to do, that the Holy Spirit is inseparably attached to their councils.

X. Even in the earliest and purest councils, however, there is something to complain of; either that the bishops who composed them, though men of learning and prudence, being perplexed with the subjects immediately before them, did not extend their views to many other things; or that while they were occupied with more weighty and serious concerns, things of inferior moment escaped their notice; or merely that being men, they were liable to ignorance and error; or that they were sometimes hurried into precipitancy by the violence of their passions. Of the truth of the last observation, which seems the severest of all, there is a remarkable example in the council of Nice; the dignity of which has been universally and justly held in the highest veneration. For though the principal article of our faith was endangered, and they had to contend with the enemy of it, who was there in readiness for the contest; though it was of the greatest importance that harmony should be maintained among those who came with a design to confute the error of Arius; notwithstanding that, careless of such great dangers, forgetful of gravity, modesty, and every thing like good manners, dropping the controversy between them, as if they had assembled with an express view to the gratification of Arius, they began to counteract themselves with intestine dissensions, and to direct against each other the pen which ought to have been employed against Arius. The foulest accusations were heard, defamatory libels were circulated, and there would have been no end of the contentions till they had murdered one another, if it had not been for the interference of the emperor Constantine, who protested that a scrutiny into their lives was a thing beyond his cognizance, and repressed this intemperate conduct with praise rather than with censure. In how many instances is it probable that errors were committed by other succeeding councils? Nor does this require any long proof; for whoever peruses their acts, will discover many infirmities, not to mention any thing worse.

XI. And Leo, the Roman pontiff, hesitates not to bring a charge of ambition and inconsiderate temerity against the council of Chalcedon, which he at the same time acknow-



ledges to have been orthodox in points of doctrine. He does not deny it to have been a legitimate council, but he unequivocally asserts that it was possible for it to err. It may be thought perhaps that I betray a want of judgment in taking pains to point out such errors; since our adversaries confess that councils might err in things not essential to salvation. This labour, however, is not unnecessary. For though they find themselves obliged to confess this in words, yet when they obtrude upon us the decision of every council on every subject, without any discrimination, as an oracle of the Holy Spirit, they require of us in fact more than they had first assumed. What is the language of such conduct, but that councils cannot err, or that if they do err, it is unlawful for us to discover the truth or to refuse assent to errors? And I intend to draw no other conclusion from these facts, than that the Holy Spirit governed pious and christian councils in such a manner, as at the same time to permit them to betray something of human infirmity, that we might not place too much confidence in men. This sentiment is far more favourable than that of Gregory of Nazianzum, "that he never saw a good end of any council." For he who affirms that all without exception terminated ill, leaves them but little authority. It is unnecessary here to take distinct notice of provincial councils, since it is easy to judge from the general councils, what authority they ought to possess in framing articles of faith, and receiving whatever kind of doctrine they pleased.

XII. But our Romanists, when they find all the supports of reason fail them in the defence of their cause, have recourse to that last and wretched subterfuge; That although the persons themselves betray the greatest stupidity in their understandings and pleas, and act from the most iniquitous motives and designs, still the word of God remains, which commands us to obey our governors. But what if I deny that such persons are our governors? For they ought not to arrogate to themselves more than belonged to Joshua, who was a prophet of the Lord and an excellent pastor. Now let us hear with what language he was inaugurated

into his office by the Lord; "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." (w) We shall consider them as our spiritual governors, therefore, who deviate not from the word of God, either to the right hand or to the left. If the doctrine of all pastors ought to be received without any hesitation, why have we such frequent and earnest admonitions from the mouth of the Lord himself, not to listen to the speeches of false prophets? "Hearken not," says he by Jeremiah "unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own hearts, and not out of the mouth of the Lord." (x) Again, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (y) The exhortation given us by John would also have been useless; "Try the spirits, whether they are of God;" (z) though from this examination the very angels are not exempted, much less Satan with all his falsehoods. How are we to understand this caution of our Lord: "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (a) Does it not sufficiently declare, that it is of the highest importance what kind of pastors are heard, and that they are not all entitled to the same attention? Wherefore there is no reason why they should overawe us with their titles, to make us partakers of their blindness, while we see on the contrary that the Lord has taken peculiar care to deter us from suffering ourselves to be seduced by the error of other men, under whatever mask or name it may be concealed. For if the answer of Christ be true, all blind guides, whether they are denominated priests, prelates, or pontiffs, can do nothing but precipitate their followers into the same ruin with themselves. Impressed, therefore, by these warnings, both of precepts and of examples, no names of pastors, bishops, or councils, which are as capable of being falsely

(w) Joshua i. 7, 8.

(x) Jer. xxiii. 16.

(y) Matt. vii. 15.

(z) 1 John iv. 1.

(a) Matt. xv. 14.

claimed as rightly assumed, ought ever to prevent us from examining all the spirits by the rule of the Divine word in order to "try whether they are of God."

XIII. Having proved that the Church has received no power to frame any new doctrine, let us now speak of the power which our opponents attribute to it in the interpretation of the Scripture. We have not the least objection to admit, that if a controversy arise respecting any doctrine, there is no better or more certain remedy than to assemble a council of true bishops, in which the controverted doctrine may be discussed. For such a decision, formed by the common consent of the pastors of the Churches, after an invocation of the Spirit of Christ, will have far greater weight, than if every one of them separately were to maintain it in preaching to his people, or if it were the result of a private conference between a few individuals. Besides, when bishops are collected in one assembly, they deliberate together with greater advantage on what they ought to teach, and the manner in which their instructions should be conveyed, so as to guard against offence arising from diversity. In the third place, Paul prescribes this method of determining respecting doctrines. For while he attributes to every distinct Church a power "to judge," (b) he shews what ought to be the order of proceeding in more important cases; namely, that the Churches should undertake the common cognizance of them. And so the dictate of piety itself teaches us, that if any one disturb the Church with a new doctrine, and the matter be carried so far as to cause danger of a more grievous dissension, the Churches should first assemble, should examine the question proposed to them, and after a sufficient discussion of it, should announce a decision taken from the Scriptures, which would put an end to all doubt among the people, and shut the mouths of refractory and ambitious persons, so as to check their further presumption. Thus when Arius arose, the council of Nice was assembled, and by its authority defeated the pernicious attempts of that impious man, restored peace to the Churches which he had



disturbed, and asserted the eternal deity of Christ in opposition to his sacrilegious dogma. Some time after, when Eunomius and Macedonius raised new contentions, their frenzy was opposed with a similar remedy by the council of Constantinople. The impiety of Nestorius was condemned in the first council of Ephesus. In short, this has been the ordinary method of the Church from the beginning, for the preservation of unity, whenever Satan has begun to make any attempt against it. But let it be remembered, that neither every age, nor every place, can produce an Athanasius, a Basil, a Cyril, and other such champions of the true doctrine, as the Lord raised up at those periods. Let it also be recollected, what happened at the second council of Ephesus, in which the heresy of Eutyches prevailed, Flavianus, a bishop of irreproachable memory, was banished, together with other pious men, and many similar enormities were committed, because it was Dioscorus, a factious and ill-disposed man, and not the Spirit of the Lord, that presided in that council. But that council, it will be said, was not the Church. I admit it: for I am firmly persuaded of this, that the truth is not extinct in the Church, though it may be oppressed by one council, but that it is wonderfully preserved by the Lord, to arise and triumph again in his own time. But I deny it to be an invariable rule, that every interpretation which may have been approved by a council is the true and certain sense of the Scripture.

XIV. But the Romanists have a farther design in maintaining that councils possess the power of interpreting the Scripture, and that without appeal. For it is a false pretence, when every thing that has been determined in councils is called an interpretation of the Scripture. Of purgatory, the intercession of saints, auricular confession, and similar fooleries, the Scriptures contain not a single syllable. But because all these things have been sanctioned by the authority of councils, or to speak more correctly, have been admitted into the general belief and practice, therefore every one of them is to be taken for an interpretation of Scripture. And not only so, but if a council determine in direct opposition to the Scriptures, it will still be called an interpretation

of it. Christ commands all to drink of the cup which he presents to them in the sacred Supper. (c) The council of Constance prohibited it to be given to the laity, and determined that none but the priest should drink of it. Yet this, which is so diametrically repugnant to the institution of Christ, they wish us to receive as an interpretation of it. Paul calls "forbidding to marry" a "doctrine of devils;" (d) and the Holy Spirit in another place pronounces that "marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." (e) The prohibition, which they have since denounced, of the marriage of priests, they wish us to consider as the true and natural interpretation of the Scriptures, though nothing can be imagined more repugnant to it. If any one dare to open his mouth to the contrary, he is condemned as a heretic, because the determination of the Church is without appeal, and the truth of its interpretation cannot be doubted without impiety. What further requires to be urged against such consummate effrontery? The mere exhibition of it is a sufficient refutation. Their pretensions to confirm the Scripture by the authority of the Church, I purposely pass over. To subject the oracles of God to the authority of men, so as to make their validity dependent on human approbation, is a blasphemy unworthy of being mentioned; beside which, I have touched on this subject already. I will only ask them one question; If the authority of the Scripture be founded on the approbation of the Church, what decree of any council can they allege to this point? I believe, none at all. Why then did Arius suffer himself to be vanquished at Nice by testimonies adduced from the Gospel of John? According to the argument of our opponents, he was at liberty to reject them, as not having yet received the approbation of any general council. They allege an ancient catalogue, which is called the Canon of Scripture, and which they say proceeded from the decision of the Church. I ask them again, in what council that canon was composed. To this they can make no reply. Yet I would wish to be further informed, what kind of a canon they suppose it to be. For

(c) Matt. xxvi. 27.

(d) 1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.

(e) Heb. xiii. 4.

I see that the ancient writers were not fully agreed respecting it. And if any weight be attached to the testimony of Jerome, the two books of the Maccabees, the history of Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, and other books, will be considered as apocryphal; to which our opponents will by no means consent.

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## CHAPTER X.

*The Power of Legislation, in which the Pope and his Adherents have most cruelly tyrannized over the Minds, and tortured the Bodies of Men.*

WE now proceed to the second branch of the power of the Church, which the Romanists represent as consisting in legislation; a source from which have issued innumerable human traditions, the most pestilent and fatal to wretched souls. For they have made no more scruple than the Scribes and Pharisees to "lay on other men's shoulders burdens which they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers." (f) I have shewn in another place the extreme cruelty of their injunctions concerning auricular confession. None of their other laws discover such enormous violence; but those which appear the most tolerable of them all, are tyrannically oppressive to the conscience. I forbear to remark how they adulterate the worship of God, and despoil God himself, who is the sole Legislator, of the right which belongs to him. This power is now to be examined; whether the Church has authority to make laws which shall bind the consciences of men. This question has nothing to do with political order; the only objects of our present attention are, that God may be rightly worshipped according to the

(f) Matt. xxiii. 4. Luke xi. 46.



rule he hath prescribed, and that our spiritual liberty which relates to God may be preserved entire. Whatever edicts have been issued by men respecting the worship of God, independently of his word, it has been customary to call *human traditions*. Against such laws we contend, and not against the holy and useful constitutions of the Church, which contribute to the preservation of discipline, or integrity, or peace. The object for which we contend, is, to restrain that overgrown and barbarous empire, which is usurped over men's souls by those who wish to be accounted the pastors of the Church, but who in reality are its most savage butchers. For they say that the laws which they make are spiritual, pertaining to the soul, and they affirm them to be necessary to eternal life. Thus, as I have lately hinted, the kingdom of Christ is invaded; thus the liberty given by him to the consciences of the faithful is altogether subverted and destroyed. I forbear to remark at present with what great impiety they enforce the observance of their laws, while they teach men to seek the pardon of their sins and righteousness and salvation from it, and while they make the whole of religion and piety to consist in it. I only contend for this one point, that no necessity ought to be imposed upon consciences in things in which they have been set at liberty by Christ, and without this liberty, as I have before observed, they can have no peace with God. They must acknowledge Christ their Deliverer as their only King, and must be governed by one law of liberty, even the sacred word of the gospel, if they wish to retain the grace which they have once obtained in Christ: they must submit to no slavery; they must be fettered by no bonds.

II. These sapient legislators indeed pretend that their constitutions are laws of liberty, an easy yoke, a light burden. But who does not see that these are gross falsehoods? The hardship of their laws is not at all felt by themselves, who have rejected the fear of God, and securely and boldly disregard all laws, human and divine. But persons who are impressed with any concern for their salvation, are far from considering themselves at liberty as long as they are entangled in these snares. We see what great caution Paul

used in this respect, to avoid “ casting a snare upon” men in a single instance; (g) and that not without cause; for he saw what a deep wound would be made in their consciences, by the imposition of any necessity upon them in those things in which the Lord had left them at liberty. On the contrary, it is scarcely possible to enumerate the constitutions, which these men have most rigorously enforced with the denunciation of eternal death, and which they require to be most minutely observed as necessary to salvation. Among these, there are many exceedingly difficult to be fulfilled; but when they are all collected together in one body, so immense is the accumulation, the observance of the whole is utterly impracticable. How then can it be possible for those who are loaded with such a vast weight of difficulty, not to be perplexed and tortured with extreme anxiety and terror? My design at present then is to oppose constitutions of this kind, which tend to bind souls internally before God, and to fill them with scruples, as if they enjoined things necessary to salvation.

III. The generality of men therefore are embarrassed with this question, for want of distinguishing with sufficient exactness between the outward judgment of men and the court of conscience. The difficulty is increased by the injunction of Paul, that the magistrate is to be obeyed, “ not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake:” (h) whence it follows, that consciences are bound by political laws. If this were the case, all that we said in the last Chapter, and are about to say in this, on the subject of spiritual government, would fall to the ground. To solve this difficulty, it is first of all necessary to understand what is conscience. The definition may be derived from the etymology of the word. *Science* or *knowledge*, is the apprehension which men have of things in their mind and understanding. So when they have an apprehension of the judgment of God, as a witness that suffers them not to conceal their sins, but forces them as criminals before the tribunal of the judge, this apprehension is called *conscience*. For it is something between God and

(g) 1 Cor. vii. 35.

(h) Rom. xiii. 5.

man, which permits not a man to suppress what he knows within himself, but pursues him till it brings him to a sense of his guilt. This is what Paul means, when he speaks of men's "conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another" (*i*) before God. A simple knowledge might remain in man as it were in a state of concealment. Therefore this sentiment, which places men before the tribunal of God, is like a keeper appointed over man to watch and observe all his secrets, that nothing may remain buried in darkness. Hence that old proverb, that conscience is equal to a thousand witnesses. For the same reason, Peter speaks of "the answer of a good conscience towards God," (*k*) to denote our tranquillity of mind, when, persuaded of the grace of Christ, we present ourselves before God without fear. And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of persons "having no more conscience of sins," (*l*) to signify their being liberated, or absolved, so as to feel no more remorse or compunction for sin.

IV. Therefore as works have respect to man, so the conscience is referred to God. A good conscience is no other than an internal purity of heart. In this sense Paul says that "the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." (*m*) In a subsequent part of the same chapter, he shews how widely it differs from simple knowledge, when he says, that "some having put away a good conscience, concerning faith have made shipwreck." (*n*) For in these words he implies that it is a lively zeal for the worship of God, and a sincere desire and endeavour to live a pious and holy life. Sometimes indeed it is likewise extended to men, as when Luke states Paul to have made this declaration, "I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." (*o*) The apostle expressed himself in this manner, because the benefits proceeding from a good conscience do reach even to man. But strictly speaking, the

(*i*) Rom. ii. 15.(*m*) 1 Tim. i. 5.(*k*) 1 Peter iii. 21(*n*) 1 Tim. i. 19.(*l*) Heb. x. 2.(*o*) Acts xxiv. 16.



conscience has respect to God alone, as I have already observed. Hence it is, that a law is said to bind the conscience, which simply binds a man without any observation or consideration of other men. For example, God not only commands the heart to be preserved chaste and pure from every libidinous desire, but prohibits all obscenity of language and external lasciviousness. My conscience is bound to observe this law, even though not another man existed in the world. The person therefore, who commits any breach of chastity, not only sins by setting a bad example to his brethren, but brings his conscience into a state of guilt before God. The case of things, in themselves indifferent, stands not on the same ground; for we ought to abstain from whatever is likely to give offence, but with a free conscience. Thus Paul speaks of meat consecrated to idols: "If any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice to idols, eat not for his sake, and for conscience sake. Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other." (*p*) A faithful man, who after previous admonition should eat such meat, would be guilty of sin. But though such abstinence is enjoined on him by God as necessary on account of his brother, he still retains his liberty of conscience. We see how this law, while it binds the external act, leaves the conscience free.

V. Let us now return to human laws. If they tend to introduce any scruple into our minds, as though the observance of them were essentially necessary, we assert, that they are unreasonable impositions on the conscience. For our consciences have to do, not with men, but with God alone. And this is the meaning of the well-known distinction, maintained in the schools, between a human tribunal and the court of conscience. When the whole world was enveloped in the thickest shades of ignorance, this little spark of light still remained unextinguished, so that they acknowledged the conscience of man to be superior to all human judgments. It is true that what they confessed in one word, they afterwards overturned in fact; yet it was the will of God that even at that time there should remain some testimony in

(*p*) 1 Cor. x. 28, 29.

favour of Christian liberty, to rescue the conscience from the tyranny of men. But we have not yet solved the difficulty which arises from the language of Paul. For if princes are to be obeyed, “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake,” (q) it seems to follow, that the laws of princes have dominion over the conscience. If this be true, the same must be affirmed of the laws of the Church. I reply; in the first place, it is necessary to distinguish between the *genus* and the *species*. For the conscience is not affected by every particular law; yet we are bound by the general command of God, which establishes the authority of magistrates. And this is the hinge upon which Paul’s argument turns, that magistrates are to be honoured because they are “ordained of God.” (r) At the same time he is far from insinuating that the laws enacted by them have any thing to do with the internal government of the soul; for he every where extols the service of God and the spiritual rule of a holy life, above all the statutes and decrees of men. A second consideration worthy of notice, which is a consequence of the first, is, that human laws, I mean such as are good and just, whether enacted by magistrates or by the Church, though they are necessary to be observed, are not on this account binding on the conscience; because all the necessity of observing them has reference to the general object of laws, but does not consist in the particular things which are commanded. There is an immense distance between laws of this description, and those which prescribe any new form for the worship of God, and impose a necessity in things that were left free and indifferent.

VI. Such are the *Ecclesiastical Constitutions*, as they are now called, in the Papacy, which are obtruded as necessary to the true worship of God: and as they are innumerable, they are so many bonds to entrap and ensnare souls. Though we have touched on them a little in the exposition of the law, yet as this is a more suitable place to discuss them at large, I shall now endeavour to collect a summary of the whole, in the best order I can. And as we have already said

(q) Rom. xiii. 5.

(r) Rom. xiii. 1.

what appeared sufficient respecting the tyrannical power, which the false bishops arrogate to themselves, of teaching whatever doctrines they please, I shall at present pass over all that subject, and confine myself to a discussion of the power which they say they have, to make laws. Our false bishops therefore burden men's consciences with new laws under this pretext; that the Lord has constituted them spiritual legislators, by committing to them the government of the Church. Wherefore they contend, that all their commands and ordinances ought of necessity to be observed by all christian people, and that whoever violates them is guilty of double disobedience, because he is a rebel both against God and the Church. Certainly, if they were true bishops, I would allow them some authority of this kind; not all that they demand, but all that is requisite to the maintenance of good order in the Church. But as they bear no resemblance of the character to which they pretend, the least they can possibly assume is more than their right. Yet as this has been already proved, let us admit the supposition at present, that whatever power true bishops are entitled to, belongs to them. Still I deny that they are therefore appointed as legislators over the faithful, with power to prescribe a rule of life according to their own pleasure, or to constrain the people committed to them to submit to their decrees. By this observation I mean, that they have no authority to enjoin upon the observance of the Church any thing that they may have invented themselves, independently of the word of God. As this power was unknown to the apostles, and was so frequently interdicted to the ministers of the Church by the mouth of the Lord, I wonder how they have dared to usurp it, and still dare to maintain it contrary to the example of the apostles, and in defiance of the express prohibition of God.

VII. Every thing pertaining to the perfect rule of a holy life, the Lord hath comprehended in his law, so that there remains nothing for men to add to that summary. And he hath done this, first, that, since all rectitude of life consists in the conformity of all our actions to his will, as their standard, we might consider him as the sole master and director of our conduct; and secondly, to shew that he re-



quires of us nothing more than obedience. For this reason James says; "He that judgeth his brother, judgeth the law; but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy." (s) We hear that God asserts this as his peculiar and exclusive prerogative; to govern us by the empire and laws of his word. And the same sentiment had before been expressed by Isaiah, though in terms not quite so explicit; "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us." (t) Both passages imply, that he who has authority over the soul, is the Arbiter of life and death; and James even clearly expresses it. No man can assume this to himself. It follows therefore that God ought to be acknowledged as the only King of souls, who alone has power to save and to destroy, or, in the language of Isaiah, as the King, Judge, Legislator, and Saviour. Wherefore Peter, when he admonishes pastors of their duty, exhorts them "to feed the flock, not as being lords over God's heritage," (v) or the company of the faithful. If we duly consider this point, that it is not lawful to transfer to man that which God appropriates solely to himself, we shall understand that this cuts off all the power which is claimed by those who wish to exalt themselves to command any thing in the Church, unsanctioned by the word of God.

VIII. Now as the whole argument rests here, that, if God is the sole legislator, it is not lawful for men to assume this honour to themselves; we ought also to bear in mind the two reasons which we have stated, why God asserts this exclusively to himself. The first is, that his will may be received as the perfect rule of all righteousness and holiness, and so that an acquaintance with it may be all the knowledge necessary to a good life. The second is, that with respect to the mode of worshipping him aright, he may exercise the sole empire over our souls, to whom we are under the strongest obligation to obey his authority and await his commands. When these two reasons are kept in view, it

(s) James iv. 11, 12.

(t) Isaiah xxxiii. 22.

(v) 1 Peter v. 2, 3.

will be easy to judge what constitutions of men are contrary to the word of God. Now of this description are all those which are pretended to belong to the true worship of God, and to be obligatory on men's consciences as necessary to be observed. Let us remember therefore, that all human laws are to be weighed in this balance, if we would have a certain and infallible test. The first of these reasons is urged by Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, in opposition to the false apostles, who endeavoured to oppress the Churches with fresh burdens. In a similar argument, in the Epistle to the Galatians, he insists more on the second reason. In the Epistle to the Colossians, he contends that the doctrine of the true worship of God is not to be sought from men, because the Lord hath faithfully and fully instructed us how we ought to worship him. To prove this, in the first chapter he states that all the wisdom by which the man of God is made perfect in Christ, is contained in the gospel. In the beginning of the second chapter, he declares that "in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" from which he concludes that the faithful should "beware lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men." At the end of the chapter he still more confidently condemns all "will-worship;" (w) this includes all those services which men either invent for themselves or receive from others, together with any of the precepts by which they presume to regulate the worship of God. Thus we have ascertained the impiety of all those constitutions, in the observance of which the worship of God is pretended to consist. The passages in the Epistle to the Galatians, in which he argues that chains ought not to be imposed on consciences, which are subject to the government of God alone, are too plain to be mistaken; especially in the fifth chapter. (x) It will therefore be sufficient to have mentioned them.

IX. But as the whole of this subject will be better elucidated by examples, before I proceed any farther, it will be useful to apply this doctrine to our own times. We affirm

(w) Col. i. 27, 28. ii. 3, 8, 23.

(x) Gal. v. 1—18.

that the Ecclesiastical Constitutions, with which the pope and his satellites oppress the Church, are pernicious and impious; our adversaries assert them to be holy and useful. Now they are of two classes; some regard rites and ceremonies, others have more relation to discipline. Is there just cause, then, to induce us to reject both? There certainly is juster cause than we would desire. In the first place, do not the authors of them explicitly declare that the very essence of the worship of God consists in them? To what end do they refer their ceremonies, but that God may be worshipped? And this arises not from the mere error of the uninformed multitude, but from the approbation of those who sustain the office of teachers. I am not yet referring to the gross abominations, by which they have attempted to overturn all piety; but they would never pretend a failure in any one of the most insignificant traditions to be such an atrocious crime, unless they made the worship of God subject to their inventions. Wherein are we guilty of any offence then, if we cannot bear in our day what was declared to be intolerable by Paul; namely, that the legitimate mode of worshipping God should be regulated by the will of men; especially, when they enjoin a worship "after the rudiments of the world," which Paul asserts to be "not after Christ." (y) It is well known also, with what rigorous necessity they bind men's consciences to observe every thing that they command. In our opposition to this, we unite in a common cause with Paul, who would by no means allow the consciences of the faithful to be subjected to the bondage of men. (z)

X. Moreover this worst of consequences ensues; that when men have begun to place religion in such vain fragments, that perversion is immediately followed by another execrable corruption, with which Christ reproached the Pharisees. "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." (a) I will not combat our modern legislators with my own words; I will grant them the victory, if they can vindicate themselves from this accu-

(y) Col. ii. 8.

(z) Gal. v. 1.

(a) Matt. xv. 6.



sation of Christ. But how can they vindicate themselves, while they esteem it infinitely more criminal, to have omitted auricular confession at a stated time of the year, than to have lived a most iniquitous life for a whole year together; to have infected the tongue with the least taste of animal food on a Friday, than to have polluted the whole body by committing fornication every day; to have put a hand to any honest labour on a day consecrated to any pretended saint, than to have continually employed all the members in the most flagitious actions; for a priest to be connected in one lawful marriage, than to be defiled with a thousand adulteries; to have failed of performing one vow of pilgrimage, than to violate every other promise; not to have lavished any thing on the enormous, superfluous, and useless magnificence of Churches, than to have failed of relieving the most pressing necessities of the poor; to have passed by an idol without some token of honour, than to have insulted all the men in the world; not to have muttered over at certain seasons a multitude of words without any meaning, than to have never offered a genuine prayer from the heart? What is it for men to make the commandment of God of none effect by their traditions, if this be not? When coldly and carelessly recommending the observance of the commandments of God, they insist on an exact obedience of their own, with as much zeal and anxiety as if the whole essence of piety consisted in them; when avenging the violation of the Divine law with slight penalties of satisfactions, they punish the smallest transgression of one of their decrees with nothing less than imprisonment, banishment, fire, or sword; when less severe and inexorable against the despisers of God, they persecute the despisers of themselves with implacable hatred even to death; and when they instruct all those whom they hold in the chains of ignorance in such a manner, that they would feel less concern at seeing the subversion of the whole law of God, than the violation of the smallest tittle of the commands of the Church? In the first place, here is a grievous error, that on account of things of no importance in themselves, and left free by God, one man despises, condemns, and rejects another. Now

as if this were not bad enough, "the beggarly elements of the world," (*b*) as Paul calls them, are esteemed of more force than the celestial oracles of God. He who is absolved in adultery, is condemned in meat; he who is allowed a harlot, is interdicted from a wife. This is the fruit of that prevaricating obedience, which recedes from God in proportion as it inclines to men.

XI. There are also two other faults, far from small ones, which we charge on these Constitutions. The first is, that they prescribe for the most part useless, and sometimes even foolish observances. The second is, that pious consciences are oppressed with the immense number of them, and being carried back to a species of judaism, are so occupied with shadows as to be prevented from coming to Christ. When I call these observances, useless and foolish, I know this will not be admitted by the wisdom of the flesh, which is so pleased with them, as to consider the Church altogether deformed where they are abolished. But these are the things which Paul describes as "having a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." (*c*) This is certainly a most salutary admonition, which ought never to be forgotten by us. Human traditions, he says, deceive under a show of wisdom. Is it inquired whence they have this appearance? I reply, that being contrived by man, the human mind recognizes them as its own, and recognizing them, embraces them with greater pleasure than it would any thing of the greatest excellence, but less agreeable to its vanity. A further recommendation of them is, that as they keep the minds of men depressed to the ground under their yoke, they appear well adapted to promote humility. Lastly, they are regarded as the expedients of prudence, from their supposed tendency to restrain corporeal indulgence, and to subdue sensuality by the rigour of abstinence. But what does Paul say to these things? Does he strip off such disguises, that the simple may not be deluded by false pretences? Satisfied that he had said enough to refute them, when he had called them

(*b*) Gal. iv. 9. Col. ii. 8.

(*c*) Col. ii. 23.

“the commandments and doctrines of men,” (*d*) he passes over all these things as undeserving of any particular refutation. And knowing that all services of human invention are condemned in the Church, and ought to excite the suspicion of the faithful in proportion to the pleasure they afford to the minds of men; knowing that false appearance of external humility to be at such an immense distance from true humility, that it might be easily distinguished from it; knowing that discipline to be entitled to no other consideration than as a mere exercise of the body; he intended these very things, by which the traditions of men are recommended to the ignorant, to serve as their refutation with the faithful.

XII. So at the present day, not only the unlearned vulgar, but those who are most inflated with worldly wisdom, are universally and wonderfully captivated with the pomp of ceremonies. Hypocrites and silly women think it impossible to imagine any thing more beautiful or excellent. But those who examine more minutely, and judge with more accuracy, according to the rule of piety, respecting the real value of those numerous ceremonies, perceive in the first place, that they are frivolous, because they have no utility; and in the next place, that they are delusive, because they deceive the eyes of the spectators with empty pomp. I speak of those ceremonies, under which, the Roman doctors contend, are concealed great mysteries, but which on examination we find to be mere mockeries. And it is not to be wondered at, that the authors and advocates of them have fallen into such folly as to delude both themselves and others with contemptible absurdities; because they have taken their model in some things from the reveries of the heathens, and in others, without any judgment, have imitated the ancient rites of the Mosaic law, which were no more applicable to us than the sacrifices of animals and other similar ceremonies. Indeed, if there were no argument besides, yet no man in his senses would expect any thing good from such a heterogeneous compound. And the fact itself plainly demonstrates, that numerous cere-



monies have no other use then to stupefy the people instead of instructing them. So hypocrites attach great importance to those novel canons, which overturn discipline rather than preserve it; for on a more accurate investigation, they will be found a mere shadow of discipline without any reality.

XIII. Now to proceed to the other fault which I have mentioned, who does not see that traditions, by the continual accumulation of one upon another, have grown to such an immense number, that they are altogether intolerable to the Christian Church? Hence it is, that the ceremonies discover a kind of judaism, and other observances inflict grievous tortures on pious souls. Augustine complained that in his time, the commands of God were neglected, and every thing was so full of presumption, that a person was more severely censured for having touched the ground with his bare feet within eight days of his baptism, than for having drowned his senses in intoxication. He complained that the Church, which the mercy of God intended to place in a state of liberty, was so grievously oppressed, that the condition of the Jews was more tolerable. If that holy man had lived in our day, with what lamentations would he have deplored the present state of bondage? For the number of ordinances is ten times greater, and every tittle is enforced with a hundred times more rigour, than in his time. Such is the general consequence, when these corrupt legislators have seized the dominion, they make no end of commands and prohibitions, till they arrive at such an extreme that obedience is scarcely if at all practicable. This is finely expressed by Paul, when he says, "If ye be dead from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances? Eat not, taste not, handle not." (e) The word *αψη*, signifying both to *eat* and to *handle*, requires here to be understood in the former sense, to avoid an unnecessary repetition. Here then he most beautifully describes the progress of the false apostles. They begin with superstition, forbidding to eat not only a large quantity, but even a little; when they have carried this point, they next forbid to taste;

(e) Col. ii. 20, 21.

and after this is submitted to them, they pronounce it unlawful even to touch with a finger.

XIV. In the present age we justly censure this tyranny in human constitutions, which astonishingly torments miserable consciences with innumerable edicts, and the extreme rigour with which they are enforced. The canons relating to discipline have been already considered. What shall I say of the ceremonies, which have half buried Christ, and caused us to return to Jewish figures? "Christ our Lord," says Augustine, "has connected together the society of the new people with sacraments, very few in number, most excellent in signification, and very easy to observe." The immense distance of this simplicity from the multitude and variety of rites in which we see the Church now involved, can hardly be stated in terms sufficiently strong. I know with what artifice some ingenious men apologize for this corruption. They say, that there are great numbers among us as ignorant as there were among the Israelites; that for their sakes such discipline was instituted, which those who are stronger, though they do not find it necessary, ought not to neglect, when they perceive it to be useful to their weak brethren. I reply, that we are not ignorant of what is due from every Christian to the infirmity of his brethren; but on the other hand, we reply that this is not the way to benefit the weak, by oppressing them with heavy loads of ceremonies. It was not without cause that the Lord hath made this difference between his ancient people and us; that he chose to instruct them like children with emblems and figures, but hath been pleased to teach us in a more simple manner, without such a large external apparatus. As "a child," says Paul, "is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father," (f) so the Jews were under the instruction and government of the law. But we resemble adults, who having left a state of tuition and guardianship, have no need of puerile discipline. Surely the Lord foresaw what sort of common people there would be in his Church, and in what manner they would require to be governed. Yet he made the difference we have

(f) Gal. iv. 1, 2.

mentioned between us and the Jews. It is a foolish way therefore to pretend to benefit the ignorant by reviving Judaism, which has been abrogated by Christ. This diversity, between the people under the old dispensation and the new, was signified by Christ, when he said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." (g) This indeed had always been the case; but the new worshippers differ from the ancient in this respect, that under Moses the spiritual adoration of God was concealed, and in some degree embarrassed with many ceremonies, which being now abolished, he is worshipped with greater simplicity. Wherefore those who confound this difference, subvert the order instituted and established by Christ. Shall no ceremonies then, it will be asked, be given to the ignorant, to assist their weakness? I say no such thing; for I think some assistance of this kind very useful to them. I only contend that such means should be employed as would tend to make known Christ, not to conceal him. God has therefore given us few ceremonies, and those by no means laborious, to exhibit Christ to us as present: the Jews had a greater number, to represent him as absent. He was then absent, I say, not as to his power, but with respect to the manner of representing him. Therefore to observe proper bounds, it is necessary to retain that paucity in number, that facility in observance, that dignity in signification, which consists in simplicity. That this has not been done, it is scarcely necessary to mention. The fact is visible to all.

XV. Here I forbear to remark the pernicious opinions with which the minds of men are impressed, that these ceremonies of human invention are sacrifices by which God is justly appeased, by which sins are expiated, by which righteousness and salvation are procured. It will be denied that things intrinsically good are corrupted by such adventitious errors, since equal guilt of this kind may be incurred in the performance of works commanded by God. But it is more intolerable to attribute so much honour to works presump-



tuously prescribed by the will of men, as to believe them to be meritorious of eternal life. For works commanded by God obtain a reward, because the Legislator himself accepts them as acts of obedience. They derive their value therefore, not from their own dignity or intrinsic merit, but from God's estimation of our obedience to him. I speak here of that perfection of works which God commands, but which men never attain. For the works of the law which we perform, are only accepted through the gratuitous goodness of God, our obedience in them being weak and imperfect. But as we are not here discussing the value of works independent of Christ, let us drop this question. With regard to the present argument, I again repeat, that whatever value is attributed to works, they derive from the consideration of the obedience, which is alone regarded by God, as he declares by the prophet; "I commanded not concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices, but this thing I commanded, saying, Obey my voice." (*h*) Of works of human device, he speaks in another place. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread;" (*i*) Again; "In vain do they worship me by the precepts of men." (*k*) Our adversaries therefore can never excuse themselves for suffering the unhappy people to seek in those external fooleries a righteousness to present before God, and to support them at the heavenly tribunal. Besides, is it not a fault deserving of severe reprehension, that they exhibit ceremonies not understood, like the scenery of a stage or a magical incantation? For it is certain that all ceremonies are corrupt and pernicious, unless they direct men to Christ. Now the ceremonies practised in the Papacy have no connection with doctrine: they confine men to mere signs, destitute of all signification. Lastly, so ingenious is cupidity, it is evident that many of them have been invented by avaricious priests, merely as contrivances for the extortion of money. But whatever be their origin, they are all so prostituted to the acquisition of gain, that it is necessary to abolish the principal part of them, if we wish to prevent a profane and sacrilegious traffic from being carried on in the Church.

(*h*) Jer. vii. 22, 23. (*i*) Isaiah lv. 2. (*k*) Isaiah xxix. 13. Matt. xv. 7—9.

XVI. Though I may be considered as not delivering a doctrine of perpetual application respecting human constitutions, because the preceding observations have been wholly directed to the present age, yet nothing has been advanced which would not be useful in all ages. For wherever this superstition intrudes, that men are determined to worship God with their own inventions, all the laws made for this purpose presently degenerate into such gross abuses as we have described. It is a curse which God denounces, not against any particular age, but against all ages, that he will strike with blindness and stupidity all those who worship him with the doctrines of men. (*l*) The invariable effect of this blindness is, that no absurdity is too great to be embraced by persons who in contempt of so many warnings from God, wilfully entangle themselves in such fatal snares. But if, irrespective of peculiar circumstances, any one wish to have a simple statement, what are the human traditions of all ages, which ought to be rejected and reprobated by the Church and all pious persons, the direction we have already given is clear and certain : That they are all laws made by men without the word of God, for the purpose, either of prescribing any method for the worship of God, or of laying the conscience under a religious obligation, as if they enjoined things necessary to salvation. If either or both of these be accompanied with other faults, such as, that the ceremonies by their multitude obscure the simplicity of the gospel; that they tend to no edification, but are useless and ridiculous occupations rather than real exercises of piety; that they are employed for the sordid purposes of dishonest gain; that they are too difficult to be observed; that they are polluted with impious superstitions; these things will further assist us in discovering the vast evil which they contain.

XVII. I hear the answer which they make; that their traditions are not from themselves but from God; for that the Church is directed by the Holy Spirit, so that it cannot err; and that they are in possession of his authority. When this point is gained, it immediately follows, that their tra-

(*l*) Isaiah xxix. 13, 14.

ditions are the revelations of the Holy Spirit, which cannot be despised without impiety, and contempt of God. That they may not appear to attempt any thing without high authorities, they wish it to be believed that the greatest part of their observances have descended from the apostles; and they contend that one example sufficiently shews what was the conduct of the apostles in other cases; when being assembled together in a council, they determined and announced to all Gentiles, that they should “abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled.” (*m*) We have already exposed the falsehood of their pretensions in arrogating to themselves the title of the Church. With regard to the present argument, if stripping off all false disguises, we confine our attention to what ought to be our chief concern, and involves our highest interest, namely, what kind of a Church Christ requires, in order that we may conform ourselves to its standard: it will be sufficiently evident to us, that the name of the Church does not belong to those who overleap all the limits of the word of God, and exercise an unbounded licence of enacting new laws. For does not that law, which was once given to the Church, remain for ever in force? “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” (*n*) And again; “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” (*o*) Since they cannot deny these things to have been spoken to the Church, do they not declare the rebellion of the Church, when they pretend that notwithstanding such prohibitions, it has dared to mingle additions of its own with the doctrine of God? Far be it from us however to countenance their falsehoods, by which they do so great an injury to the Church; let us know that the assumption of the name of the Church is a false pretence in all who are so carried away by the violence of human presumption, as to disregard all the restraints of the word of God, and to introduce a torrent of their own inventions. There is nothing involved, nothing intricate, nothing ambiguous in these words, by which the whole

(*m*) Acts xv. 29, 29.(*n*) Deut. xii. 32.(*o*) Prov. xxx. 6.



Church is forbidden to add any thing to the word, or to diminish any thing from it, in any question relating to the worship of God and his salutary precepts. But it will be alleged, that this was spoken exclusively of the law, which has been succeeded by the prophecies and the whole dispensation of the gospel. This I certainly admit, and at the same time assert, that these were accomplishments of the law, rather than additions to it, or retrenchments of it. But if the Lord suffered no enlargement or diminution of the ministry of Moses, notwithstanding it was enveloped in such great obscurity, till he dispensed a clearer doctrine by his servants the prophets, and finally by his beloved Son; why do not we consider ourselves far more severely prohibited from making any addition to the law, the prophets, the psalms, and the gospel? No change has taken place in the Lord, who long ago declared that nothing was so highly offensive to him, as to attempt to worship him with the inventions of men. Hence those striking declarations in the prophets, which ought to be continually sounding in our ears; “I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you.” (p) Again; “I earnestly protested unto your fathers, saying, Obey my voice.” (q) There are many other similar passages, but the most remarkable of all is the following: “Hath the Lord,” says Samuel, “as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.” (r) Therefore, whatever human inventions relating to the worship of God may be defended by the authority of the Church, since it is impossible to vindicate them from impiety, it is easy to infer that the imputation of them to the Church has no foundation in truth.

(p) Jer. vii. 22, 23.

(q) Jer. xi. 7.

(r) 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23.

XVIII. For this reason we freely censure that tyranny of human traditions, which is imposed upon the world under the name of the Church. Nor do we hold the Church in contempt, as our adversaries, in order to render us obnoxious, falsely assert. We allow it the praise of obedience, than which no higher praise can be given. On the contrary, they are themselves the most outrageous violators of the Church, which they represent as guilty of rebellion against the Lord, when they pretend that it has gone beyond what was permitted by the word of God: to say nothing of the combination of impudence and wickedness discovered in their incessant vociferations respecting the authority of the Church, while they take no notice of the command of the Lord, or of the obedience due from the Church to that command. But if we desire, as we ought, to agree with the Church, it will be best for us to observe and remember what commands are given by the Lord, equally to us and to the whole Church, that we may all obey him with one consent. For there is no doubt that we shall fully agree with the Church, if we shew ourselves in all things obedient to the Lord. Now to attribute to the apostles the origin of the traditions which have hitherto oppressed the Church, is a mere imposture; for the whole tendency of the doctrine of the apostles was that men's consciences should not be burdened with new observances, or the worship of God contaminated with human inventions. Besides, if there be any credit due to ancient histories and records, the apostles not only never knew, but never even heard of that which is ascribed to them. Nor let it be pretended, that the greatest part of their Constitutions were received in use and commonly practised, which were never committed to writing; namely, those things which during the life of Christ they were not able to understand, but which after his ascension they learned from the revelation of the Holy Spirit. The meaning of that passage we have already examined. With respect to the present subject, we may observe, they make themselves truly ridiculous by maintaining that those great mysteries, which were so long unknown to the apostles, consisted partly of Jewish or heathen ceremonies, of which the former had long before

been promulgated among the Jews, and the latter among the heathens, and partly of foolish gesticulations and unmeaning rites, which stupid priests, who scarcely know how to walk or speak, perform with the greatest exactness, and which even infants and fools counterfeit so well, that it might be thought there were no more suitable ministers of such solemnities. If there were no histories, yet men of sound judgment would conclude from the thing itself, that such a vast multitude of rites and observances did not break into the Church all on a sudden, but that they must have been introduced by degrees. For when those holy bishops, who were the immediate successors of the apostles, had made some appointments relating to order and discipline, they were followed by a series of others, who had too little consideration and too much curiosity and cupidity, of whom every one in succession vied with his predecessors, from a foolish emulation to excel them in the invention of new observances. And because there was danger that their inventions, by which they desired to obtain the praises of posterity, might in a short time be disused, they were the more rigid in enforcing the observance of them. This foolish and perverse imitation has been the source of most of those rites, which the Romanists urge upon us as apostolic. And this is also attested by various histories.

XIX. To avoid too much prolixity in composing a catalogue of them all, we shall content ourselves with one example. In the administration of the Lord's Supper, the apostles used great simplicity. Their immediate successors, to adorn the dignity of the mystery, added some forms which were not to be altogether condemned. Afterwards followed those foolish imitators, who by adding various fragments from time to time, at length formed these vestments of the priests, those ornaments of the altar, those gesticulations, and all that apparatus of useless things, which we see in the mass. But they object that it was an ancient opinion, that whatever was done with the common consent of the universal Church, had originated from the apostles. In proof of this, they cite the testimony of Augustine. I shall give them no other answer than in the words of Augustine himself. "Those



things which are observed throughout the world," says he, "we may understand to have been ordained, either by the apostles themselves, or by general councils, whose authority is very useful in the Church: as that the sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, are celebrated by solemn anniversaries; and if there be any thing else of a similar kind observed by the universal Church wherever it has extended itself." When he enumerates so few examples, who does not see that he intended to attribute to authors worthy of credit and reverence the observances which were then in use, and none but those simple, rare, and sober ones which are useful in preserving the order of the Church? But how distant is this passage from the conclusion the Roman doctors would extort from it, that there is not the most insignificant ceremony among them which ought not to be considered as resting on the authority of the apostles?

XX. Not to be too tedious, I will produce only one example. If any one inquire whence they have their holy water, they immediately answer, From the apostles. As if the histories did not attribute this invention to a bishop of Rome, who if he had taken counsel of the apostles, would certainly never have contaminated baptism by a strange and unseasonable symbol. Though it does not appear to me probable that the origin of that consecration was so ancient as those histories state. For the observation of Augustine, that some Churches in his time rejected the custom of washing the feet as a solemn imitation of Christ, lest that ceremony might be supposed to have any reference to baptism, implies that there was no other kind of washing then practised which bore any resemblance to baptism. Be this as it may, I shall never admit it to have been a dictate of the spirit of the apostles, that baptism should be recalled to the memory by a daily ablution, which would be little else than a repetition of it. It is of no consequence that Augustine elsewhere ascribes other things also to the apostles; for as he has nothing but conjectures, no conclusion ought to be drawn from them on such an important subject. Lastly, though we should even grant, that those things which he mentions

had been transmitted from the time of the apostles, yet there is a wide difference between instituting some pious exercise which the faithful may use with a free conscience, or if they find not profitable, may abstain from the use of it; and making laws to entangle their consciences with bondage. But whoever was their author, since we see that they have fallen into so great an abuse, nothing prevents our abolishing them without any disrespect to him; because they were never instituted in order to be perpetual and unalterable.

XXI. Nor does the cause of our adversaries derive much advantage from their attempt to excuse their own tyranny by alleging the example of the apostles. The apostles, they say, and elders of the primitive Church, passed a decree without the command of Christ, enjoining all the Gentiles to "abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled." (s) If this was lawful for them, why may it not be lawful for their successors, whenever circumstances require, to imitate their conduct? I sincerely wish they would imitate them in other things as well as in this. For I deny that the apostles on that occasion instituted or decreed any thing new, as it is easy to prove by a sufficient reason. For when Peter had declared in that assembly that to "put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples," would be to "tempt God," (t) he would have contradicted his own opinion, if he had afterwards consented to the imposition of any yoke. Yet there was a yoke imposed, if the apostles decreed from their own authority, that the Gentiles should be prohibited "from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled." There still remains some difficulty, that nevertheless they seem to prohibit them. But this will be easily solved, if we more closely examine the meaning of the decree itself; of which the first point in order, and principal in importance, is, that the gentiles were to be left in possession of their liberty, and not to be disturbed or troubled about the observance of the law. So far it is completely in our favour. The exception which immediately follows, is not a new law made by the apostles, but the divine and

(s) Acts xv. 29.

(t) Acts xv. 10.

eternal command for the preservation of charity inviolate, nor does it diminish a tittle of that liberty; it only admonishes the gentiles how they ought to accommodate themselves to their brethren, to avoid offending them by an abuse of their liberty. The second point therefore is, that the gentiles were to use a harmless liberty and without offence to their brethren. If it be still objected, that they prescribe a certain direction, I reply, that as far as was expedient for that period, they point out and specify the things in which the gentiles were liable to give offence to their brethren, that they might refrain from them; yet they add nothing new of their own to the eternal law of God, by which offences against our brethren are prohibited.

XXII. As if any faithful pastors who preside over Churches not yet well regulated, were to recommend all their people not to eat meat openly on Fridays, or to labour publicly on festivals, or the like, till their weaker neighbours should be more established. For though, setting aside superstition, these things are in themselves indifferent, yet when they are attended with offences to brethren, they cannot be performed without sin: and the times are such, that the faithful could not do these things in the presence of their weak brethren, without most grievously wounding their consciences. Who but a caviller would say that in this instance they made a new law, whereas it would evidently appear that their sole object was to guard against offences which are most expressly forbidden by the Lord? No more can it be said of the apostles, who had no other design in removing the occasion of offences, than to urge the Divine law respecting the avoidance of offence: as though they had said; It is the command of the Lord, that you hurt not your weak brother; you cannot eat meats offered to idols, or blood, or things strangled, without your weak brethren being offended; therefore we command you by the word of the Lord, not to eat with offence. And that such was the intention of the apostles, Paul himself is an unexceptionable witness, who, certainly in consistence with their sentence, writes in the following manner. "As concerning the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an



idol is nothing. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge; for some with conscience of the idol, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak." (v) He who shall have duly considered these things, will not afterwards be deceived by the fallacy of those who attempt to justify their tyranny by the example of the apostles, as if they had begun to infringe the liberty of the Church by their decree. But that they may not be able to avoid confirming this solution by their own confession, let them tell me by what right they have dared to abrogate that decree. They can only reply, Because there was no more danger from those offences and dissensions which the apostles intended to guard against, and they knew that a law was to be judged of by the end for which it was made. As this law therefore is admitted to have been made from a consideration of charity, there is nothing prescribed in it any further than charity is concerned. When they confess that the transgression of this law is no other than a violation of charity, do they not thereby acknowledge that it is not a novel addition to the law of God, but a genuine and simple application of it to the times and manners for which it was designed?

XXIII. But it is contended, that though the ecclesiastical laws should in a hundred instances be unjust and injurious to us, yet they ought all to be obeyed without any exception; for that the point here is not that we should consent to errors, but that we who are subjects should fulfil even the severe commands of our governors, which we are not at liberty to reject. But here likewise the Lord most happily interposes with the truth of his word, delivers us from such bondage, and establishes us in the liberty which he hath procured for us by his sacred blood, the benefit of which he hath repeatedly confirmed by his word. For the question here is not, as they fallaciously pretend, merely whether we shall endure some grievous oppression in our bodies; but whether our consciences shall be deprived of their liberty, that is, of the

benefit of the blood of Christ, and shall be tormented with a wretched bondage. Let us however pass over this also, as if it were matter of little importance. But do we think it a matter of little importance to deprive the Lord of his kingdom, which he claims to himself in such a peremptory manner? And it is taken away from him, whenever he is worshipped with laws of human invention, whereas he requires himself to be honoured as the sole legislator of his own worship. And that no one may suppose it to be a thing of trivial importance, let us hear in what estimation it is held by the Lord. "Forasmuch," he says, "as this people draw near me with their mouth, but their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." (w) Again, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (x) When the children polluted themselves by various idolatries, the cause of all the evil is attributed to the impure mixture which they made by devising new modes of worship in violation of the commands of God. Therefore the sacred history relates that the strangers who had been transplanted by the king of Babylon from other countries to inhabit Samaria, were torn in pieces and devoured by wild beasts, "because they knew not the statutes or ordinances of the God of the land." Though they had committed no fault in the ceremonies, yet vain pomp would not have been approved by God; but he did not fail to punish the violation of his worship, when men introduced new inventions inconsistent with his word. Hence it is afterwards stated, that being terrified with that punishment, they received rites prescribed in the law, yet because they did not yet worship the true God aright, it is twice repeated that "they feared the Lord," and at the same time that "they feared not the Lord." (y) Whence we conclude, that part of the reverence which is paid to him consists in our worshipping him in a simple adherence

(w) Isaiah xxix. 13, 14.

(x) Matt. xv. 9.

(y) 2 Kings xvii. 24—34.

to his commands, without the admixture of any inventions of our own. Hence the frequent commendations of pious kings, that they “walked in all his commandments, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.” (z) I go still further; though in some services of human invention there appears no manifest impiety, yet as soon as ever men have departed from the command of God, it is severely condemned by the Holy Spirit. The altar of Ahaz, the model of which was brought from Damascus, might seem to be an addition to the ornaments of the temple, because his design was to offer sacrifices upon it to God alone, with a view to perform these services in a more splendid manner than upon the ancient and original altar; yet we see how the Holy Spirit detests such audacity, for no other reason than because all the inventions of men in the worship of God are impure corruptions. (a) And the more clearly the will of God is revealed to us, the more inexcusable is our presumption in making any such attempt. Wherefore the guilt of Manasseh is justly aggravated by the circumstance of his having “built” new “altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord said, In Jerusalem will I put my name;” (b) because such conduct was like a professed rejection of the authority of God.

XXIV. Many persons wonder why the Lord so severely threatened that he would “do a marvellous work among the people,” whose “fear toward him” was “taught by the precepts of men,” and pronounces that he is “worshipped in vain” by “the commandments of men.” But if such persons would consider what it is to follow the word of God alone in matters of religion, that is, of heavenly wisdom, they would immediately perceive it to be for no trivial reason that the Lord abominates such corrupt services, which are rendered to him according to the caprice of the human mind. For though persons who obey such laws for the worship of God, have a certain appearance of humility in this their obedience, yet they are very far from being humble before God, to whom they prescribe the same laws which they observe themselves. This is the reason why Paul requires us

(z) 2 Kings xxii. 2. 2 Chron. xvii. 4, et alib.

(a) 2 Kings xvi. 10, &amp;c.

(b) 2 Kings xxi. 4.



to be so particularly cautious against being deceived by the traditions of men, and will-worship, that is voluntary worship, invented by men without the word of God. (c) And so indeed it is, that our own wisdom, and that of all other men, must become folly in our esteem, that we may allow God alone to be truly wise. This is very far from being the case with those who study to render themselves acceptable to him by petty observances of human contrivance, and obtrude upon him, in opposition to his commands, a hypocritical obedience, which in reality is rendered to men. This was the conduct of men in former ages; the same has happened within our own remembrance, and still happens in those places where the authority of the creature is more regarded than that of the Creator; where religion, if religion it deserve to be called, is polluted with more numerous and senseless superstitions than ever disgraced the worship of paganism. For what could proceed from the minds of men, but things carnal, foolish, and truly expressive of their authors?

XXV. When the advocates of superstition allege, that Samuel sacrificed in Ramah, that there this was done without the direction of the law, yet it was acceptable to God; (d) the answer is easy, that this was not the erection of a second altar in opposition to one already erected, and appointed by the Divine command to supersede every other, but as there had yet been no fixed place assigned for the ark of the covenant, he appointed the town which he inhabited for the oblation of sacrifices, as the most convenient place. It certainly was not the intention of the holy prophet to make any innovation in religious worship, in which God had so strictly forbidden any thing to be added or diminished. The example of Manoah I consider as an extraordinary and singular case. Though a private man, he offered a sacrifice to God, yet not without the Divine approbation; because he did it not from the hasty impulse of his own mind, but in consequence of the secret inspiration of heaven. (e) But of the Lord's utter abomination of all the contrivances of mortals in his worship, we have a memorable example in another

(c) Col. ii. 4, 8, 18, 23.

(d) 1 Sam. vii. 17.

(e) Judges xiii. 19.

person, not inferior to Manoah, I mean Gideon, whose ephod produced fatal consequences, not only to himself and his family, but to all the people. (*f*) In short every additional invention by which men pretend to serve God, is nothing but a pollution of true holiness.

XXVI. Why then, it is inquired, was it the will of Christ that men should submit to those intolerable burdens which were imposed upon them by the Scribes and Pharisees? (*g*) I ask on the other hand, why did Christ in another place direct men to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?” (*h*) By *leaven*, according to the interpretation given us by the Evangelist, intending every doctrine of their own that they mixed with the pure word of God. What can we wish for plainer, than when he commands us to avoid and beware of all their doctrine? Hence it is very evident to us, that in the other passage our Lord did not intend that the consciences of his disciples should be harassed with the traditions of the Pharisees; and the words themselves, if they are not perverted, convey no such meaning. For being about to deliver a severe invective against the conduct of the Pharisees, our Lord only prefaced it by instructing his hearers, that though they would see nothing in their lives worthy of imitation, yet they should continue to practise those things which were taught by them in their discourses, when they were sitting in the chair of Moses, that is to say, when they were expounding the law. His only design, therefore, was to guard the people against being induced to despise the doctrine by the bad examples of those who taught it. But as some persons are never affected by arguments, but always require authority, I will subjoin the words of Augustine, who gives exactly the same interpretation. “The Lord’s fold has pastors, some faithful, some hireling. Those who are faithful are true shepherds; yet hear how the hirelings also are necessary. For many in the Church, pursuing worldly advantages, preach Christ, and the voice of Christ is heard through them; and the sheep follow not the hireling, but the Shepherd by means of

(*f*) Judges viii. 27.(*g*) Matt. xxiii. 3.(*h*) Matt. xvi. 6.

the hireling. Hear how the hirelings are pointed out by the Lord himself. He says, The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's chair; what they say, do; but what they do, imitate not. Is not this equivalent to saying, Hear the voice of the Shepherd through the hirelings; for sitting in the chair of Moses, they teach the law of God; therefore God teaches by them; but if they choose to teach any thing of their own, neither attend to it, nor practise it?

XXVII. But as many ignorant persons, when they hear that the consciences of men ought not to be bound by human traditions, and that it is in vain to worship God by such services, immediately conclude the same rule to be applicable to all the laws which regulate the order of the Church, we must also refute their error. It is easy indeed to be deceived in this point, because it does not immediately appear at the first glance what a difference there is between the one and the other: but I will place the whole subject in such a clear light in a few words, that no one may be misled by the resemblance. In the first place let us consider, that if in every society of men we see the necessity of some polity in order to preserve the common peace, and to maintain concord; if in the transaction of business there is always some order, which the interest of public virtue, and even of humanity itself, forbids to be rejected; the same ought particularly to be observed in Churches, which are best supported by a well-ordered regulation of all their affairs, and which without concord are no Churches at all. Wherefore if we would make a proper provision for the safety of the Church, we ought to pay the strictest attention to the injunction of Paul, that "all things be done decently and in order." (i) But as there is such great diversity in the manners of men, so great a variety in their minds, and so much contrariety in their judgments and inclinations, no polity will be sufficiently steady unless it be established by certain laws, nor can any order be preserved without some settled form. The laws therefore which promote this end, we are so far from condemning, that we contend, their abolition would be follow-

(i) 1 Cor. xiv. 40.



ed by a disruption of the bands of union, and the total disorganization and dispersion of the Churches. For it is impossible to attain what Paul requires, that "all things be done decently and in order," unless order and decorum be supported by additional regulations. But in regard to such regulations, care must always be taken, that they be not considered necessary to salvation, and so imposing a religious obligation on the conscience; or applied to the worship of God, and so represented as essential to piety.

XXVIII. We have an excellent and most certain mark, therefore, which distinguishes those impious constitutions, by which it has been stated that true religion is obscured and men's consciences subverted, and the legitimate regulations of the Church, which are always directed to one of these two ends, or to both together; that in the holy assembly of the faithful, all things may be conducted with suitable decorum and dignity, or that the community may be kept in order by the firm bonds of courtesy and moderation. For when it is once understood that a law is made for the sake of public order, this removes the superstition embraced by them who place the worship of God in human inventions. Moreover, when it is known that it only refers to matters of common practice, this overturns all that false notion of obligation and necessity, which filled men's consciences with great terror, when traditions were thought necessary to salvation. For here nothing is required but the maintenance of charity among us by the common intercourse of friendly offices. But it is proper to describe more fully, what is comprehended under the decorum, and the order, which Paul recommends. The end of *decorum* is, partly, that while ceremonies are employed to conciliate veneration to sacred things, we may be excited to piety by such aids; partly, that the modesty and gravity, which ought to be discovered in all virtuous actions, may be most of all conspicuous in the Church. In *order*, the first point is, that those who preside should be acquainted with the rule and law of good government, and that the people who are governed should be accustomed to an obedience to God and to just discipline: the

second is, that when the Church is in a well regulated state, care should be taken to preserve its peace and tranquillity.

XXIX. We shall not call that *decorum*, therefore, which is merely a frivolous spectacle, yielding an unprofitable gratification: such as we see exemplified in the theatrical apparatus employed by the Papists in their services, where nothing is to be seen but a useless appearance of elegance, and splendour without any advantage. But we shall esteem that as *decorum*, which shall be so adapted to inspire a reverence of holy mysteries as to be calculated for an exercise of piety; or which at least shall contribute an ornament corresponding to the act; and that not without some beneficial tendency, but that the faithful may be admonished with what modesty, fear, and reverence, they ought to engage in sacred services. Now that ceremonies may be exercises of piety, it is necessary that they should lead us directly to Christ. In like manner, we do not place *order* in those nugatory pomps which have nothing but a vain appearance of splendour, but in that well regulated polity, which excludes all confusion, incivility, obstinacy, clamours, and dissensions. Of the first kind, examples are furnished by Paul; as that profane banquets should not be connected with the sacred Supper of the Lord; that women should not appear in public without being veiled; (*k*) and many others in common use among us; such as, that we pray with bended knees and with our heads uncovered; that we administer the sacraments of the Lord, not in a slovenly manner, but with due *decorum*; that we observe some decent order in the burial of the dead; and other things of a similar nature. Of the second sort are, the hours appointed for public prayers, sermons; and sacraments; quietness and silence under sermons; the singing of hymns; the places appointed for these services, and the days fixed for the celebration of the Lord's Supper; (*l*) the prohibition of Paul, that women should not teach in the Church; and the like: but especially the regulations for the preservation of discipline, as catechising, ecclesiastical censures, excommunication, fastings, and every thing else that can be referred to

(*k*) 1 Cor. xi. 5, xiv. 34.

(*l*) 1 Cor. xi. 20—22.

the same class. Thus all the constitutions of the Church, which we receive as holy and useful, may be classed under two heads; some refer to rites and ceremonies, others to discipline and peace.

XXX. But because there is danger here, on the one hand, that the false bishops may seize a pretext to excuse their impious and tyrannical laws, and on the other, that there may be some persons who, from an excessive fear of falling into the evils we have mentioned, will reject all ecclesiastical laws, however holy and useful they may be; it is necessary to protest, that I approve of no human constitutions, except such as are founded on the authority of God, and deduced from the Scripture, so that they may be considered as altogether divine. Let us take, as an example, the kneeling practised during solemn prayers. The question is, whether it be a human tradition, which every one is at liberty to reject or neglect. I answer that it is at once both human and divine. It is of God, as it forms a branch of that decorum which is recommended to our attention and observance by the apostle; it is of men, as it particularly designates that which had in general been rather hinted than clearly expressed. From this single example, it is easy to judge what opinion ought to be entertained of all the rest. Because the Lord in his holy oracles hath faithfully comprehended and plainly declared to us the whole nature of true righteousness, and all the parts of divine worship, with whatever is necessary to salvation, in these things he is to be regarded as our only master. Because in external discipline and ceremonies he hath not been pleased to give us minute directions what we ought to do in every particular case, foreseeing that this would depend on the different circumstances of different periods, and knowing that one form would not be adapted to all ages, here we must have recourse to the general rules which he hath given, that to them may be conformed all the regulations which shall be necessary to the decorum and order of the Church. Lastly, as he hath delivered no express injunctions on this subject, because these things are not necessary to salvation, and ought to be applied to the edification of the Church, with a variety suitable to the manners of each age and nation, there-



fore, as the benefit of the Church shall require, it will be right to change and abolish former regulations, and to institute new ones. I grant indeed, that we ought not to resort to innovation rashly or frequently, or for trivial causes. But charity will best decide what will injure or edify, and if we submit to the dictates of charity, all will be well.

XXXI. Now such regulations as have been made upon this principle and for this end, it is the duty of christian people to observe, with a free conscience indeed, and without any superstition, yet with a pious and ready inclination: they must not treat them with contempt or carelessness, much less violate them in an open manner through pride and obstinacy. It will be asked, what kind of liberty of conscience can be retained amidst so much attention and caution? I reply, it will very well be supported, when we consider, that these are not fixed and perpetual laws by which we are bound, but external aids for human infirmity, which though we do not need, yet we all use, because we are under obligations to each other to cherish mutual charity between us. This may be observed in the examples already mentioned. What? does religion consist in a woman's veil, so that it would be criminal for her to walk out with her face uncovered? Is the solemn decree respecting her silence, such as cannot be violated without a capital offence? Is there any mystery in kneeling, or in the interment of a dead body, which cannot be omitted without sin? Certainly not: for if a woman, in the assistance of a neighbour, finds a necessity for such haste as allows her no time to cover her head, she commits no offence in running to the place with her head uncovered. And it is sometimes as proper for her to speak, as at other times to be silent. And he who from disease is unable to kneel, is quite at liberty to pray standing. Lastly, it is better to bury a dead body in proper season, even without a shroud, than for want of persons to carry it to burial, to suffer it to putrify without interment. Nevertheless in these things, the customs and laws of the country we inhabit, the dictates of modesty, and even humanity itself, will direct us what to do, and what to avoid: and if an error be incurred through inadvertence or forget-

fulness, no crime is committed, but if through contempt, such perverseness deserves to be reprobated. So it is of little importance, what days and hours are appointed, what is the form of the places, what psalms are sung on the respective days. But it is proper that there should be certain days and stated hours, and a place capable of receiving all the people, if any regard be paid to the preservation of peace. For what a source of contentions would be produced by the confusion of these things, if every man were permitted to change at his pleasure what relates to the general order; for it would never happen that the same thing would be agreeable to all, if things were undetermined and left to the choice of every individual. If any one object, and resolve to be wiser on this subject than is necessary, let him examine by what reason he can justify his obstinacy to the Lord. We ought however to be satisfied with the declaration of Paul; "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the Churches of God." (*m*)

XXXII. Now it is necessary to exert the greatest diligence to prevent the intrusion of any error, which may corrupt or obscure this pure use of ecclesiastical regulations. This end will be secured, if all the forms, whatever they may be, carry the appearance of manifest utility, if very few are admitted, and principally if they are accompanied with the instructions of a faithful pastor, to shut the door against all corrupt opinions. The consequence of this knowledge is that every person will retain his liberty in all these things, and yet will voluntarily impose some restraint upon his liberty, so far as the decorum we have mentioned, or the dictates of charity, shall require. In the next place, it will be necessary, that without any superstition we should attend to the observance of these things ourselves, and not too rigidly exact it from others; that we should not esteem the worship of God to be improved by the multitude of ceremonies; and that one Church should not despise another on account of a variety of external discipline. Lastly, establishing no perpetual law of this kind for ourselves, we ought to refer the

use and end of all such observances to the edification of the Church, according to the exigence of which we should be content not only with the change of some particular observance, but with the abolition of any that have hitherto been in use among us. For that the abrogation of some ceremonies, not otherwise inconsistent with piety or decorum, may become expedient from the circumstances of particular periods, the present age exhibits an actual proof. For such has been the blindness and ignorance of former times, Churches have heretofore adhered to ceremonies with such corrupt sentiments and such obstinate zeal, that it is scarcely possible for them to be sufficiently purified from monstrous superstitions without the abolition of many ceremonies, for the original institution of which perhaps there was some cause, and which are not in themselves remarkable for any impiety.

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## CHAPTER XI.

*The Jurisdiction of the Church, and its Abuse under the Papacy.*

WE come now to the third branch of the power of the Church, and that which is the principal one in a well regulated state, which we have said consists in jurisdiction. The whole jurisdiction of the Church relates to the discipline of manners, of which we are about to treat. For as no city or town can exist without a magistracy and civil polity, so the Church of God, as I have already stated, but am now obliged to repeat, stands in need of a certain spiritual polity; which however is entirely distinct from civil polity, and is so far from obstructing or weakening it, that, on the contrary, it highly conduces to its assistance and advancement. This power of jurisdiction therefore will in short be no other than



an order instituted for the preservation of the spiritual polity. For this end, there were from the beginning judicaries appointed in the Churches, to take cognizance of manners, to pass censures on vices, and to preside over the use of the keys in excommunication. This order Paul designates in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, when he mentions "governments;" (*n*) and to the Romans, when he says, "He that ruleth," let him do it "with diligence." (*o*) He is not speaking of magistrates or civil governors, for there was at this time no Christian magistrates, but of those who were associated with the pastor in the spiritual government of the Church. In the First Epistle to Timothy, also, he mentions two kinds of presbyters or elders, some "who labour in the word and doctrine," others who have nothing to do with preaching the word, and yet "rule well." (*p*) By the latter class, there can be no doubt that he intends those who were appointed to the cognizance of manners, and to the whole exercise of the keys. For this power, of which we now speak, entirely depends on the keys, which Christ has conferred upon the Church in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew; where he commands that those who shall have despised private admonitions, shall be severely admonished in the name of the whole Church; and that if they persist in their obstinacy, they are to be excluded from the society of the faithful. (*q*) Now these admonitions and corrections cannot take place without an examination of the cause; hence the necessity of some judicature and order. Wherefore unless we would nullify the promise of the keys, and entirely abolish excommunication, solemn admonitions, and every thing of a similar kind, it is necessary to allow the Church some jurisdiction. Let it be observed, that the passage to which we have referred, relates not to the general authority of the doctrine to be preached by the apostles, as in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew and the twentieth chapter of John; but that the power of the sanhedrim is for the future transferred to the Church of Christ. Till that time, the Jews had their own method of

(*n*) 1 Cor. xii. 28.(*o*) Rom. xii. 8.(*p*) 1 Tim. v. 17.(*q*) Matt. xviii. 15—18.

government, which, as far as regards the pure institution, Jesus Christ established in his Church, and that with a severe sanction. For this was absolutely necessary, because the judgment of an ignoble and despised Church might otherwise be treated with contempt by presumptuous and proud men. And that the readers may not be embarrassed by the circumstance of Christ having used the same words to express different things, it will be useful to solve this difficulty. There are two places which speak of *binding* and *loosing*. One is in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, where Christ, after having promised Peter that he would "give" him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," (r) immediately adds, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." In these words he means precisely the same as he intends in other language recorded by John, when, being about to send forth his disciples to preach, after having "breathed on them," he said, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (s) I shall offer an interpretation of this passage, without any subtilty, violence, or perversion, but natural, suitable, and obvious. This command respecting the remission and retention of sins, and the promise made to Peter respecting binding and loosing, ought to be wholly referred to the ministry of the word, which when our Lord committed to the apostles, he at the same time invested them with the power of binding and loosing. For what is the sum of the gospel, but that, being all slaves of sin and death, we are loosed and delivered by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and that those who never receive or acknowledge Christ as their Deliverer and Redeemer, are condemned and sentenced to eternal chains? When the Lord delivered this embassy to his apostles, to be conveyed to all nations, in order to evince it to be his, and to have proceeded from him, he honoured it with this remarkable testimony, and that for the particular confirmation both of the apostles themselves, and of all those to whom it was to be

(r) Matt. xvi. 19.

(s) John xx. 22, 23.

announced. It was of importance, that the apostles should have a strong and constant assurance of their preaching; which they were not only to undertake and execute amidst immense labours, cares, troubles, and dangers, but were at length to seal with their blood. That they might know this ministry not to be vain or ineffectual, but full of power and energy, it was of importance for them in circumstances of such great anxiety, difficulty, and danger, to be persuaded that they were employed in the work of God, amidst all the hostility and opposition of the whole world, to know that God was on their side; and though Christ, the Author of their doctrine, was not present to their view on earth, to be certain that he was in heaven to confirm the truth of the doctrine which he had delivered to them. On the other hand also, it was necessary that the most unequivocal testimony should be given to their hearers, that the doctrine of the gospel was not the word of the apostles, but of God himself; not a voice issuing from the earth, but descended from heaven. For these things, the remission of sins, the promise of eternal life, and the message of salvation, cannot be in the power of man. Therefore Christ has testified that in the preaching of the Gospel, nothing belonged to the apostles, except the ministration of it; that it was he himself who spoke and promised every thing by the instrumentality of their mouths; and consequently, that the remission of sins which they preached was the true promise of God, and that the condemnation which they denounced was the certain judgment of God. Now this testification has been given to all ages, and remains unaltered, to certify and assure us all, that the word of the gospel, by whomsoever it may happen to be preached, is the very sentence of God himself, promulgated from his heavenly tribunal, recorded in the book of life, ratified, confirmed, and fixed in heaven. Thus we see, that the power of the keys in these passages is no other than the preaching of the gospel, and that considered with regard to men, it is not so much authoritative as ministerial; for strictly speaking, Christ has not given this power to men, but to his word, of which he has appointed men to be the ministers.

II. The other passage, which we have mentioned, relative



to the power of binding and loosing, is in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, where Christ says; "If any brother neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." (1) This passage is not altogether similar to the first, but is to be understood in a manner somewhat different; though I do not conceive the difference to be so great, but that there is a considerable affinity between them. In the first place, they are both alike in this respect, that each contains a general declaration, the same power of always binding and loosing, that is, by the word of God, the same command, the same promise. But they differ in this, that the former passage peculiarly relates to the preaching of the gospel, which is performed by the ministers of the word; the latter relates to the discipline, which is committed to the Church. The Church binds him whom it excommunicates; not that it consigns him to perpetual ruin and despair, but because it condemns his life and manners, and already warns him of his final condemnation, unless he repent. The Church looses him whom it receives into its communion; because it makes him as it were a partaker of the unity which it has in Christ Jesus. That no man therefore may condemn the judgment of the Church, or consider it as of little consequence that he is condemned by the voice of the faithful, the Lord testifies that such judgment of the faithful is no other than the promulgation of his sentence, and that what they do on earth shall be ratified in heaven. For they have the word of God, by which they condemn the perverse; they have the same word, by which they receive penitents into favour: and they cannot err or dissent from the judgment of God, because they judge only by the divine law, which is not an uncertain or earthly opinion, but the holy will and heavenly oracle of God. From these two passages, which I think I have familiarly and correctly, as well as concisely explained, these unreasonable men, without any judgment, under the influence of misguided

(1) Matt. xviii. 17, 18.

zeal, endeavour to establish, sometimes auricular confession, sometimes excommunication, sometimes jurisdiction, sometimes the right of legislation, and sometimes indulgences. The former passage they allege to support the primacy of the Roman see. They are so expert in fitting their keys to any locks and doors they please, that it should seem as if they had followed the business of locksmiths all their lifetime.

III. The opinion entertained by some persons, that these things were only temporary, while all civil magistrates were strangers to the profession of Christianity, is a mistake, for want of considering the great distinction, and the nature of the difference, between the ecclesiastical and civil power. For the Church has no power of the sword to punish or to coerce, no authority to compel, no prisons, fines, or other punishments, like those inflicted by the civil magistrate. Besides, the object of this power is, not that he who has transgressed may be punished against his will, but that he may profess his repentance by a voluntary submission to chastisement. The difference therefore is very great; because the Church does not assume to itself what belongs to the magistrate, nor can the magistrate execute that which is executed by the Church. This will be better understood by an example. Is any man intoxicated? In a well-regulated city, he will be punished by imprisonment. Has he committed fornication? He will receive the same, or a severer punishment. With this, the laws, the magistrate, and the civil judgment, will all be satisfied; though it may happen that he will give no sign of repentance, but will rather murmur and repine against his punishment. Will the Church stop here? Such persons cannot be admitted to the sacred Supper without doing an injury to Christ and to his holy institution. And reason requires, that he who has offended the Church with an evil example, should remove, by a solemn declaration of repentance, the offence which he has excited. The argument adduced by those who espouse a contrary opinion, is of no force. They say, that Christ assigned this office to the Church, when there was no magistrate to execute it. But it frequently happens that the magistrate

is too negligent, and sometimes that he even deserves to be chastised himself; which was the case with the emperor Theodosius. Besides, the same argument might be extended to the whole ministry of the word. Now then, according to them, pastors must no longer censure notorious crimes; they must cease to chide, to reprove, to rebuke: for there are christian magistrates, whose duty it is to correct such offences by the civil sword. But as it is the duty of the magistrate, by punishment and corporeal coercion, to purge the Church from offences; so it behoves the minister of the word on his part to relieve the magistrate by preventing the multiplication of offenders. Their respective operations ought to be so connected as to be an assistance, and not an obstruction to each other.

IV. And indeed whoever will closely examine the words of Christ, will easily perceive that they describe the stated and perpetual order, and not any temporary regulation, of the Church. For it is unreasonable for us to bring an accusation before a magistrate, against those who refuse to submit to our admonitions; yet this would be necessary if the magistrate succeeded to this office of the Church. What shall we say of this promise, "Verily I say unto thee, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven?" Was it only for one, or for a few years? Besides, Christ here instituted nothing new, but followed the custom always observed in the ancient Church of his own nation; thereby signifying, that the spiritual jurisdiction, which had been exercised from the beginning, was indispensable to the Church. And this has been confirmed by the consent of all ages. For when emperors and magistrates began to assume the profession of Christianity, the spiritual jurisdiction was not in consequence abolished, but only regulated in such a manner as neither to derogate from the civil power, nor to be confounded with it. And that justly; for a pious magistrate will not wish to exempt himself from the common subjection of the children of God, which in no small degree consists in submitting to the Church, when it judges by the word of God: so very far is it from being his duty to abolish such a judicature. "For what is more honourable," says Ambrose, "than for



the emperor to be called the Son of the Church? For a good emperor is within the Church, not above the Church." Wherefore those, who to exalt the magistrate despoil the Church of this power, not only pervert the language of Christ by a false interpretation, but pass a most severe censure on all the holy bishops who have lived since the time of the apostles, for having usurped to themselves, under a false pretext, the honour and dignity which belonged to the magistrate.

V. But on the other hand, it is also worth while to examine, what was the true and ancient use of the jurisdiction of the Church, and what a great abuse of it has been introduced; that we may know what ought to be abrogated, and what ought to be restored from antiquity, if we would overturn the reign of Antichrist, and re-establish the true kingdom of Christ. In the first place, the object to be secured is the prevention of offences, or the abolition of any that may have arisen. In the use of it, two things require to be considered; first, that this spiritual power be entirely separated from the power of the sword; secondly, that it be administered, not at the pleasure of one man, but by a legitimate assembly. Both these things were observed in the purer ages of the Church. For the holy bishops never exercised their authority by fines, imprisonments, or other civil punishments; but, as became them, employed nothing but the word of the Lord. For the severest vengeance, the ultimate punishment of the Church, is excommunication, which is never resorted to without absolute necessity. Now excommunication requires no external force, but is content with the power of the word of God. In short, the jurisdiction of the primitive Church was no other than a practical exposition of the description which Paul gives of the spiritual authority of pastors. This power he represents as conferred for the purpose of "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in readiness to revenge all disobedience." (v) As this is accomplished by the preaching of the

doctrine of Christ, so to preserve that doctrine from falling into contempt, they who profess themselves of the household of faith ought to be judged by what that doctrine contains. That cannot be done, except the ministry be accompanied with the power to take cognizance of those who are to be privately admonished, or more severely censured, and also to exclude from the communion of the Supper those who cannot be admitted without a profanation of such a solemn sacrament. Wherefore when he denies, in another place, that we have any right "to judge them that are without," (v) he makes the children of the Church subject to the censures by which their faults are chastised, and implies the existence at that time of judicatures from which none of the faithful were exempt.

VI. This power, as we have stated, was not in the hands of one man, for him to act according to his own pleasure, but resided in the assembly of the elders, which was in the Church what a senate is in a city. Cyprian, when he mentions by whom it was exercised in his time, generally unites all the clergy with the bishop; but in other passages he also shews, that the clergy presided in such a manner, that the people were not excluded from this cognizance. For he expresses himself in these words; "From the commencement of my episcopate, I have determined to do nothing without the council of the clergy and the consent of the people." But the common and usual custom was for the jurisdiction of the Church to be exercised by the council of the presbyters; of whom, as I have observed, there were two classes: for some were ordained to the office of teaching, others were only censors of manners. This institution gradually degenerated from its original establishment; so that in the time of Ambrose, the judicial administration of the Church was wholly in the hands of the clergy; of which he complains in the following language. "The ancient synagogue, and afterwards the Church, had elders, without whose advice nothing was done. I know not by what negligence this practice has been discontinued, except from the indolence of the

doctors, or rather from their pride, while they wish none but themselves to be seen." We perceive the indignation of that holy man, that there had been some declension from a better state of things, while they still retained an order that was at least tolerable. What would he say now, if he were to see the present deformed ruins, which exhibit scarcely a vestige of the ancient edifice? What a complaint would he make? First, in opposition to law and justice, that which had been given to the Church, the bishop usurped entirely to himself. This resembles the conduct of a consul or president expelling the senate, and seizing the sole administration of a government. But as the bishop is superior to other persons in honour, so the assembly or congregation possesses more authority than one individual. It was a gross outrage therefore, for one man to transfer to himself all the power of the community, and thereby to open a door to licentious tyranny, to deprive the Church of its rights, and to suppress and abolish an assembly appointed by the Spirit of Christ.

VII. But as one evil always produces another, bishops disdaining this charge as unworthy of their attention, have delegated it to others. Hence the creation of officials, to discharge that duty. I say nothing at present of the characters of the persons, I only assert, that they differ in no respect from civil judges; yet they still call it a spiritual jurisdiction, where all the contention is about secular affairs. Though there were no other evil, what effrontery must they have, to call a court full of litigation, the judicature of the Church? But it is alleged, it employs admonitions, and pronounces excommunication. Is it thus that they trifle with God? Does a poor man owe a sum of money? He is cited. If he appear, he is condemned: after the condemnation, if he do not pay, he is admonished: after the second admonition, they proceed to excommunication. If he do not appear to the citation, he is admonished to be forth coming: if he delay, he is admonished a second time, and soon after is excommunicated. I ask, what is there in this that bears any resemblance to the institution of Christ, the ancient usage, or the order of the Church? It is further alleged, that this court also corrects vices. I reply, that acts of fornication, lasciv-



viousness, and drunkenness, and similar enormities, they not only tolerate, but sanction and encourage by a kind of tacit approbation, and that not only in the people, but even in the clergy themselves. Among multitudes of offenders, they only summon a few, either to avoid too flagrant an appearance of connivance, or for the purpose of extorting money. I say nothing of the robbery, the rapine, the peculation, the sacrilege, connected with this office. I say nothing of the characters of most of the persons selected to discharge it. It is more than sufficient for us, that while the Romanists boast of their spiritual jurisdiction, it is easy to shew that nothing is more contrary to the order appointed by Christ, and that it has no more resemblance to the ancient practice than darkness has to light.

VIII. Though we have not said all that might be adduced for this purpose, and what we have said has been condensed within a small compass, yet I trust we have so refuted our adversaries, as to leave no room for any one to doubt that the spiritual power arrogated by the Pope and all his hierarchy, is a tyrannical usurpation, chargeable with impious opposition to the word of God, and injustice to his people. Under the term *spiritual power*, I include their audacity in fabricating new doctrines, by which they have seduced the unhappy people from the native purity of the word of God, the iniquitous traditions by which they have ensnared them, and the pretended ecclesiastical jurisdiction which they exercise by their suffragans, vicars, penitentiaries, and officials. For if we allow Christ any kingdom among us, all this kind of domination must immediately fall to the ground. The power of the sword, which they also claim, as that is not exercised over consciences but operates on property, is irrelevant to our present subject: though in this also it is worth while to remark, that they are always consistent with themselves, and are at the greatest possible distance from the character they would be thought to sustain, as pastors of the Church. Here I am not censuring the particular vices of individuals, but the general wickedness and common pest of the whole order, which they would expect to be degraded, if it were not dis-

tinguished by wealth and lofty titles. If we consult the authority of Christ on this subject, there is no doubt that he intended to exclude the ministers of his word from civil dominion and secular sovereignty, when he said ; “ The kings of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them ; but it shall not be so among you.” (w) For by these words he signifies, not only that the office of a pastor is distinct from the office of a prince, but that they are so different, that they can never be properly united in one man. For though Moses held both these offices at once, it may be observed, first, that this was the result of a special miracle, secondly, that it was only a temporary arrangement, till things should be better regulated. But as soon as God prescribed a certain form of government, Moses was left in possession of the civil administration, and was commanded to resign the priesthood to his brother : and that for a very sufficient reason ; for it is beyond the ability of nature for one man to be capable of sustaining the burden of both. And this has been carefully observed in the Church in all ages. For as long as any real appearance of a Church remained, not one of the bishops ever thought of usurping the power of the sword ; so that it was a common proverb in the time of Ambrose, “ That emperors rather coveted the priesthood, than priests the empire :” for as he afterwards observes, it was the firm and universal opinion, “ That palaces belonged to emperors, and churches to priests.”

IX. But since a method has been contrived for bishops to retain the title, honour, and emoluments of their office without any burden or solicitude, that they might not be left entirely without occupation, the power of the sword has been given to them, or rather they have usurped it to themselves. With what plea will they defend such impudence ? Was it for bishops to perplex themselves with judicial proceedings, to assume the government of cities and provinces, and to undertake various other occupations so incompatible with their office, which alone would furnish them so much labour and employment, that even if they were entirely and assiduously

(w) Matt. xx. 25, 26. Luke xxii. 25, 26.

devoted to it, without the least distraction of other avocations, they would scarcely be able to discharge its functions? But they have the hardihood to boast, that this causes the Church of Christ to flourish with a glory suitable to its dignity, and at the same time that they are not too much distracted from the duties of their vocation. With respect to the first point, if it be a becoming ornament of the sacred office, for those who sustain it to be elevated to a degree of power formidable to the greatest monarchs, they have reason to expostulate with Christ, by whom their honour has been so grievously wounded. For in their opinion at least, what could have been said more disgraceful than the following language? "The kings of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them; but it shall not be so among you." (x) Nor has he prescribed a severer law to his servants than he first imposed upon himself. "Man," says he, "who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (y) We see he plainly refuses to act the part of a judge, which he would not have done, had it been a thing consistent with his office. Will not his servants allow themselves to be reduced to that rank, to which their Lord voluntarily submitted himself? With respect to the second point, I wish they could as easily prove it by experience as make the assertion. But since the apostles thought it not right for them "to leave the word of God, and serve tables," (z) this must confound those, who are reluctant to admit, that it is not in the power of the same man to be at the same time a good bishop and a good prince. For if they, who by the extent of the gifts with which they were endued, were enabled to sustain far more numerous and weighty cares than any men who have lived since their time, after all confessed themselves incapable of attending to the word of God and the service of tables without fainting under the burden; how should it be possible for these men, who are by no means to be compared to the apostles, so vastly to surpass them in industry? The very attempt has betrayed the most consummate effrontery and presumptuous confidence. Yet we see it has been done; with what success, is obvious:

(x) Matt. xx. 25, 26. Luke xxii. 25, 26. (y) Luke xii. 14. (z) Acts vi. 2.



the unavoidable consequence has been the desertion of their own functions, and intrusion into those which belonged to others.

X. It has without doubt been from small beginnings, that they have gradually risen to such eminence. For it was not possible for them to make so great an advance at one step. But, sometimes by fraudulent and secret artifices, they exalted themselves in a clandestine manner, so that no one perceived the encroachment till it had been effected; sometimes, when opportunity offered, by terrifying and menacing princes, they extorted from them some augmentation of their power; sometimes, when they saw princes inclined to favour them, they abused their foolish and inconsiderate pliability. In early times, if any controversy arose, the faithful, in order to avoid the necessity of litigation, used to refer it to the decision of their bishop, of whose integrity they were fully satisfied. The ancient bishops were frequently embarrassed with such arbitrations, which exceedingly displeased them, as Augustine somewhere declares; but to save the parties from law-suits, they reluctantly undertook this troublesome business. From voluntary arbitrations, which were entirely different from the processes of civil courts, their successors have erected an ordinary jurisdiction. In a subsequent period, when cities and countries were oppressed with various distresses, they had recourse to the patronage of their bishops, that they might be protected by their influence; succeeding bishops, by wonderful artifice, of protectors have made themselves lords. Nor can it be denied, that the principal acquisitions they have made, have been effected by faction and violence. The princes, who voluntarily invested the bishops with jurisdiction, were actuated to this by various motives. But though their indulgence may have exhibited some appearance of piety, yet their preposterous liberality was by no means adapted to promote the benefit of the Church, the ancient and genuine discipline of which they thereby corrupted, or rather, to say the truth, utterly annihilated. But those bishops who have abused such kindness of princes to their own profit, have sufficiently evinced by this one specimen, that they were in reality no bishops at all

For if they had possessed a particle of the apostolic spirit, they would unquestionably have answered, in the language of Paul, that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but” (a) spiritual. Instead of this, hurried away with a blind cupidity, they have ruined themselves, and their successors, and the Church.

XI. At length the Roman pontiff, not content with small provinces, first laid his hand upon kingdoms, and then seized upon the empire. And to assign some plausible pretext for retaining a possession acquired by mere robbery, he sometimes boasts that he holds it by Divine right, sometimes pretends the donation from Constantine, and sometimes pleads some other title. In the first place, I answer with Bernard, that supposing he could vindicate his claim by any other reason, yet he cannot establish it by any apostolic right. “For Peter could not give what he never possessed; but he left his successors what he did possess, the care of the Churches. But as the Lord and Master said of himself, that he was not constituted a judge between two persons, the servant and disciple ought not to think it any disgrace not to be judge of all men.” Bernard is speaking here of civil judgments, for he adds, addressing the pope; “Therefore your power is over sins and not over possessions, since it is for the former and not for the latter, that you have received the keys of the kingdom of heaven. For which appears to you the superior dignity, to remit sins, or to divide lands? There is no comparison. These low and earthly things are subject to the judgment of kings and princes of the earth? Why do you invade the province of others?” Again, “You are made a superior. For what purpose? Not to exercise dominion, I apprehend. However highly we think of ourselves, therefore, let us remember that we are appointed to a ministry not invested with a sovereignty. Learn that you want no sceptre to do the work of a prophet.” Again, “It is plain that sovereignty is forbidden to the apostles. Go then, if you dare, and sustaining the office of a temporal sovereign, usurp the name of an apostle, or filling an apostolical office,

(a) 2 Cor. x. 4.

usurp a temporal sovereignty." And immediately after, "This is the apostolic form, they are forbidden to exercise any dominion, they are commanded to minister and serve." Though all these observations of Bernard are evidently consistent with the truth, and even though the true state of the case must be obvious to all without any thing being said, yet the Roman pontiff was not ashamed, at the council of Arles, to decree, that the supreme power of both swords belonged to him by divine right.

XII. With respect to the donation of Constantine, persons who have only a moderate acquaintance with the histories of those times, need no information how fabulous and even ridiculous this is. But to leave the histories, Gregory, who lived above four hundred years after, is alone a competent and very sufficient witness of this fact. For wherever he speaks of the emperor, he gives him the title of Most Serene Lord, and calls himself his unworthy servant. In one place he says, "Let not our lord from his earthly power be too ready to treat priests with disdain; but with excellent consideration for the sake of him whose servants they are, let him rule over them in such a manner, as at the same time to pay them due reverence." We see how in the common subjection he wished to be considered as one of the people; for he is there pleading not another person's cause, but his own. In another place he says, "I trust in Almighty God, that he will grant a long life to our pious lords, and will govern us under your hand according to his mercy." I have not quoted these passages with any design to discuss at large this question of the donation of Constantine, but merely to shew my readers by the way, what a puerile falsehood it is of the Romanists, to attempt to claim a temporal sovereignty for their pontiff. And so much the more contemptible is the impudence of Augustine Steuchus, the pope's librarian, who has had the effrontery to prostitute his labours to serve his master in such a desperate cause. Laurentius Valla had amply refuted that fable, which was no difficulty to a man of learning, and an acute reasoner; yet, like a man little conversant in ecclesiastical affairs, he had not said all that would have corroborated the argument.



Steuchus sallies forth, and scatters the most disgusting trash to obscure the clear light. But in fact, he pleads the cause of his master with no more force, than if some facetious wit, ironically professing the same object, were in reality supporting the opposite side of the question. But this cause is well worthy of such advocates as the pope hires to defend it; and equally worthy are those mercenary scribblers of being disappointed in their hopes of gain, as was the case with Eugubinus.

XIII. But if any one inquire the time when this extraordinary empire began to arise, there have not yet elapsed five hundred years since the pontiffs were still in subjection to the emperors, and no pontiff was created without the authority of the emperor. The first occasion of innovation in this order was given to Gregory VII. by the emperor Henry, the fourth of that name, a man of rash and unsteady disposition, of no judgment, great audacity, and dissolute life. For when he had all the bishoprics of Germany in his court, either to be exposed to sale, or to be distributed as a booty, Hildebrand, who had been offended with him, seized a plausible pretext to avenge himself. Because he appeared to advocate a good and pious cause, he was assisted by the favour of many; and Henry, on the other hand, had rendered himself odious to the generality of princes, by the insolence of his government. At length Hildebrand, who assumed the name of Gregory VII. being a man of no piety or integrity, betrayed the wickedness of his heart; in consequence of which, many who had concurred with him afterwards deserted him. He so far succeeded, however, as to enable his successors not only to cast off the imperial yoke with impunity, but even to oblige the emperors to submit to them. After that time there were many emperors, more like Henry than like Julius Cæsar, whom there was no difficulty in overcoming, while they were sitting at home in indolence and unconcern, when there was the greatest necessity for every vigorous and legitimate exertion to repress the cupidity of the pontiffs. Thus we see with what plausibility they have represented this admirable donation of Constantine, by which the pope pretends himself to have been invested with the sovereignty of the Western empire.

XIV. From that period the pontiffs have never ceased encroaching on the jurisdictions, and seizing on the territories of others, sometimes employing fraud, sometimes treachery, and sometimes open war; even the city of Rome itself, which till then was free, about a hundred and thirty years ago was compelled to submit to their dominion; in short, they proceeded to make continual advances, till they attained the power which they at present possess; and for the retention or augmentation of which, they have now, for the space of two hundred years (for they had begun before they usurped the government of the city) so disturbed and distracted the christian world, that they have brought it to the brink of ruin. In the time of Gregory the First, when the guardians of the ecclesiastical property seized for themselves the lands which belonged to the Church, and according to the custom of princes, set up their titles and armorial bearings on them in token of their claim, Gregory assembled a provincial council of bishops, in which he severely inveighed against that profane custom, and asked whether they would not excommunicate any ecclesiastic who should attempt the seizure of property by the inscription of a title, or even any bishop who should direct such a thing to be done, or if done without his direction, should not punish it. They all pronounced that every such offender should be excommunicated. But if claiming a field by the inscription of a title, be a crime deserving of excommunication in a priest; when for two whole centuries the pontiffs have been meditating nothing but wars, effusion of blood, slaughter of armies, storming and pillaging cities, the destruction of nations, the devastation of kingdoms, for the sole purpose of seizing the dominions of others; what excommunications can be sufficient for the punishment of such examples? It is clear, beyond all doubt, that the glory of Christ is the object furthest from their pursuit. For if they voluntarily resign all the secular power which they possess, no danger will result to the glory of God, to sound doctrine, or to the safety of the Church; but they are infatuated, and stimulated by the mere lust of do-

minion; and consider nothing as safe, unless, as the prophet says, "they rule with force and with cruelty." (b)

XV. With jurisdiction is connected the immunity which the Roman ecclesiastics arrogate to themselves. For they consider it a degradation for them to appear before a civil judge in personal causes, and they imagine the liberty and dignity of the Church to consist in their exemption from the common judicature and laws. But the ancient bishops, who in other respects were the most rigid assertors of the rights of the Church, esteemed it no injury to themselves, or to their order, to be subject to lay judges in civil causes. The pious emperors also, without any opposition, always summoned the clergy before their tribunals, whenever necessity required it. For this is the language of Constantine, in his epistle to the bishops of Nicomedia; "If any bishop excite any disturbance by his indiscretion, his presumption shall be restrained by the authority of the minister of God, that is, by mine." And Valentinian says; "Good bishops never traduce the power of the emperor; but sincerely observe the commands of God the sovereign king, and obey our laws." At that time this principle was universally admitted, without any controversy. Ecclesiastical causes were referred to the judgment of the bishop. As for example, if any ecclesiastic had committed no crime against the laws, he was only charged with offending against the canons, he was not summoned to the common tribunal, but was judged by the bishop. In like manner, if a question was agitated respecting an article of faith, or any other subject properly belonging to the Church, to the Church the cognizance of it was committed. In this sense is to be understood what Ambrose writes to the emperor Valentinian; "Your father, of august memory, not only answered verbally, but also ordained by edicts, that in a cause relating to faith, he ought to judge, who is not disqualified by office or dignity." Again; "If we regard the scriptures or ancient examples, who will deny that in a cause of faith, I say, in a cause of faith, it is customary for bishops to judge of Christian emperors, and not emperors of bishops?"



Again ; “ I would have come to your consistory, Sire, if either the bishops or the people would have suffered me to go ; but they say, that a cause of faith ought to be discussed in the Church, in the presence of the people.” He contended that a spiritual cause, that is, a cause affecting religion, ought not to be carried into a civil court, where secular controversies are agitated ; and his constancy in this respect has been universally and justly applauded. Yet notwithstanding the goodness of his cause, he went no further than to declare, that if the emperor proceeded to employ force, he would submit. He says, “ I will not voluntarily desert the station committed to me : in case of compulsion, I know not how to resist, for our arms are prayers and tears.” Let us observe the singular combination of moderation and prudence with magnanimity and confidence in this holy man. Justina, the mother of the emperor, because she could not induce him to join the Arians, endeavoured to deprive him of his bishopric. And she would have succeeded in her attempts, if, in compliance with the summons, he had gone to the palace of the emperor to plead his cause. Therefore he denied the emperor to be a competent judge of so important a controversy : and this was necessary both from the circumstances of that time, and from the invariable nature of the subject itself. For he was of opinion, that it was his duty to suffer death rather than by his consent to permit such an example to be transmitted to posterity ; and yet in case of violence being employed, he cherished not a thought of resistance. For he denied it to be compatible with the character of a bishop, to defend the faith and privileges of the Church by arms ; but in other cases he shewed himself ready to do whatever the emperor would command. “ If he demands tribute,” says he, “ we do not refuse it ; the lands of the Church pay tribute. If he demands the lands, he has power to take them ; none of us will oppose him.” Gregory also speaks in a similar manner. “ I am not ignorant,” he says, “ of the mind of our most serene lord, that he is not in the habit of interfering in sacerdotal causes, lest he should in any respect be burdened with our sins.” He does not entirely exclude the emperor from judging priests, but observes

that there are certain causes which he ought to leave to the decision of the Church.

XVI. And even in this exception, the sole object of these holy men was to prevent the tyrannical violence and caprice of princes less favourable to religion from obstructing the Church in the discharge of its duty. For they did not disapprove of the occasional interposition of princes in ecclesiastical affairs, provided they would exert their authority for the preservation of order, and not for the disturbance of it; for the establishment of discipline, and not for its relaxation. For as the Church neither possesses, nor ought to desire, the power to constrain, I speak of civil coercion, it is the part of pious kings and princes to support religion by laws, edicts, and judicial sentences. For this reason, when the emperor Mauritius commanded certain bishops to receive their neighbouring colleagues, who had been expelled from their sees by the barbarians, Gregory confirmed this command, and exhorted them to obey it. And when he himself was admonished by the same emperor to be reconciled to John, the bishop of Constantinople, he did indeed assign a reason why he ought not to be blamed, yet he boasted no immunity exempting him from the imperial authority, but on the contrary promised compliance as far as should be consistent with a good conscience; and at the same time acknowledged that Mauritius acted in a manner becoming a religious prince in giving such commands to the bishops.

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## CHAPTER XII.

*The Discipline of the Church: its principal Use in Censures and Excommunication.*

**T**HE discipline of the Church, the discussion of which I have deferred to this place, must be dispatched in a few words, that we may proceed to the remaining subjects. Now the

discipline depends chiefly on the power of the keys, and the spiritual jurisdiction. To make this more easily understood, let us divide the Church into two principal orders; the clergy and the people. I use the word *clergy* as the common, though improper, appellation of those who execute the public ministry in the Church. We shall, first, speak of the common discipline to which all ought to be subject; and in the next place, we shall proceed to the clergy, who beside this common discipline, have a discipline peculiar to themselves. But as some have such a hatred of discipline, as to abhor the very name, they should attend to the following consideration: That if no society, and even no house, though containing only a small family, can be preserved in a proper state without discipline, this is far more necessary in the Church, the state of which ought to be the most orderly of all. As the saving doctrine of Christ is the soul of the Church, so discipline forms the ligaments which connect the members together, and keep each in its proper place. Whoever, therefore, either desire the abolition of all discipline, or obstruct its restoration, whether they act from design or inadvertency, they certainly promote the entire dissolution of the Church. For what will be the consequence, if every man be at liberty to follow his own inclinations? But such would be the case, unless the preaching of the doctrine were accompanied with private admonitions, reproofs, and other means to enforce the doctrine, and prevent it from being altogether ineffectual. Discipline, therefore, serves as a bridle to curb and restrain the refractory, who resist the doctrine of Christ; or as a spur to stimulate the inactive; and sometimes as a father's rod, with which those who have grievously fallen may be chastised in mercy and with the gentleness of the Spirit of Christ. Now when we see the approach of certain beginnings of a dreadful desolation in the Church, if there be no solicitude or means to keep the people in obedience to our Lord, necessity itself proclaims the want of a remedy: and this is the only remedy which has been commanded by Christ, or which has ever been adopted among the faithful.



II. The first foundation of discipline consists in the use of private admonitions; that is to say, that if any one be guilty of a voluntary omission of duty, or conduct himself in an insolent manner, or discover a want of virtue in his life, or commit any act deserving of reprehension, he should suffer himself to be admonished; and that every one should study to admonish his brother, whenever occasion shall require: but that pastors and presbyters, beyond all others, should be vigilant in the discharge of this duty, being called by their office, not only to preach to the congregation, but also to admonish and exhort in private houses, if in any instances their public instructions may not have been sufficiently efficacious: as Paul inculcates, when he says, that he “taught publicly and from house to house,” and protests himself to be “pure from the blood of all men,” having “ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” (c) For the doctrine then obtains its full authority, and produces its due effect, when the minister not only declares to all the people together what is their duty to Christ, but has the right and means of enforcing it upon them whom he observes to be inattentive, or not obedient to the doctrine. If any one either obstinately reject such admonitions, or manifest his contempt of them by persisting in his misconduct; after he shall have been admonished a second time in the presence of witnesses, Christ directs him to be summoned before the tribunal of the Church, that is, the assembly of the elders, and there to be more severely admonished, by the public authority, that if he reverence the Church, he may submit and obey; but if this do not overcome him, and he still persevere in his iniquity, our Lord then commands him, as a despiser of the Church, to be excluded from the society of the faithful. (d)

III. But as Jesus Christ in this passage is speaking only of private faults, it is necessary to make this distinction, That some sins are private, and others public or notorious. With respect to the former, Christ says to every private individual, “Tell him his fault between thee and him, alone.” (e) With

(c) Acts xx. 20, 26, 31. (d) Matt. xviii. 15—17. (e) Matt. xviii. 15.

respect to those which are notorious, Paul says to Timothy, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." (f) For Christ had before said, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee." Which no person who is not contentious can understand in any other sense, than if our Lord had said, "If any one sin against thee, and thou alone knowest it, without any other persons being acquainted with it." But the direction given by the apostle to Timothy, to rebuke publicly those whose transgressions were public, he himself exemplified in his conduct to Peter. For when Peter committed a public offence, he did not admonish him in private, but brought him forward before all the Church. (g) The legitimate course then will be,—in correcting secret faults, to adopt the different steps directed by Christ; and in the case of those which are notorious, to proceed at once to the solemn correction of the Church, especially if they be attended with public offence.

IV. It is also necessary to make another distinction between different sins; some are smaller delinquencies, others are flagitious or enormous crimes. For the correction of atrocious crimes, it is not sufficient to employ admonition or reproof; recourse must be had to a severer remedy; as Paul shews, when he does not content himself with censuring the incestuous Corinthian, but pronounces sentence of excommunication immediately on being certified of his crime. Now then we begin to have a clearer perception how the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church, which corrects sins according to the word of the Lord, is a most excellent preservative of health, foundation of order, and bond of unity. Therefore when the Church excludes from its society all who are known to be guilty of adultery, fornication, theft, robbery, sedition, perjury, false witness, and other similar crimes, together with obstinate persons, who, after having been admonished even of smaller faults, contemn God and his judgment; it usurps no unreasonable authority, but only exercises the jurisdiction which God has given it. And that no one may despise this judgment of the Church, or consider

(f) 1 Tim. v. 20.

(g) Gal. ii. 11, 14.

it as of little importance that he is condemned by the voice of the faithful, God hath testified that it is no other than a declaration of his sentence, and that what they do on earth shall be ratified in heaven. For they have the word of the Lord, to condemn the perverse; they have the word, to receive the penitent into favour. Persons who believe that the Church could long subsist without this bond of discipline, are mistaken in their opinion, unless we could safely dispense with that remedy which the Lord foresaw would be necessary for us: and how very necessary it is, will be better discovered from its various use.

V. Now there are three ends proposed by the Church in those corrections, and in excommunication. The first is, that those who lead scandalous and flagitious lives, may not, to the dishonour of God, be numbered among Christians; as if his holy Church were a conspiracy of wicked and abandoned men. For as the Church is the body of Christ, it cannot be contaminated with such foul and putrid members without some ignominy being reflected upon the Head. That nothing may exist in the Church, therefore, from which any disgrace may be thrown upon his venerable name, it is necessary to expel from his family all those from whose turpitude infamy would redound to the profession of christianity. Here it is also necessary to have particular regard to the Lord's Supper, that it may not be profaned by a promiscuous administration. For it is certain that he who is entrusted with the dispensation of it, if he knowingly and intentionally admit an unworthy person, whom he might justly reject, is as guilty of sacrilege as if he were to give the Lord's body to dogs. Wherefore Chrysostom severely inveighs against priests, who from a fear of the great and the powerful, did not dare to reject any persons who presented themselves. "Blood," says he, "shall be required at your hands. If you fear man, he will deride you; if you fear God, you will also be honoured among men. Let us not be afraid of sceptres, or diadems, or imperial robes; we have here a great power. As for myself, I will rather give up my body to death, and suffer my blood to be shed, than I will be a partaker of this pollution." To guard this most



sacred mystery, therefore, from being reproached, there is need of great discretion in the administration of it, and this requires the jurisdiction of the Church. The second end is, that the good may not be corrupted, as is often the case, by constant association with the wicked. For, such is our propensity to error, nothing is more easy than for evil examples to seduce us from rectitude of conduct. This use of discipline was remarked by the apostle, when he directed the Corinthians to expel from their society a person who had been guilty of incest. "A little leaven," says he, "leaveneth the whole lump." (*h*) And the apostle perceived such great danger from this quarter, that he even interdicted the faithful from all social intercourse with the wicked. "I have written unto you, not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (*i*) The third end is, that those who are censured or excommunicated, confounded with the shame of their turpitude, may be led to repentance. Thus it is even conducive to their own benefit, for their iniquity to be punished, that the stroke of the rod may arouse to a confession of their guilt, those who would only be rendered more obstinate by indulgence. The apostle intends the same when he says, "If any man obey not our word, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (*k*) Again, when he says, of the incestuous Corinthian, "I have judged to deliver such an one unto Satan, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord;" (*l*) that is, as I understand it, that he had consigned him to a temporal condemnation, that the spirit might be eternally saved. He therefore calls it *delivering to Satan*, because the devil is *without* the Church, as Christ is *in* the Church. For the opinion of some persons, that it relates to a certain torment of the body in the present life, inflicted by the agency of Satan, appears to me extremely doubtful.

VI. Having stated these ends, it remains for us to examine how the Church exercises this branch of discipline,

(*h*) 1 Cor. v. 6. (*i*) 1 Cor. v. 11. (*k*) 2 Thess. iii. 14. (*l*) 1 Cor. v. 3, 5.

which consists in jurisdiction. In the first place, let us keep in view the distinction before mentioned, that some sins are public, and others private, or more concealed. Public sins are those which are not only known to one or two witnesses, but are committed openly, and to the scandal of the whole Church. By private sins, I mean, not such as are entirely unknown to men, like those of hypocrites, for these never come under the cognizance of the Church, but those of an intermediate class, which are not without the knowledge of some witnesses, and yet are not public. The first sort requires not the adoption of the gradual measures enumerated by Christ; but it is the duty of the Church, on the occurrence of any notorious scandal, immediately to summon the offender, and to punish him in proportion to his crime. Sins of the second class, according to the rule of Christ, are not to be brought before the Church, unless they are attended with contumacy, in rejecting private admonition. When they are submitted to the cognizance of the Church, then attention is to be paid to the other distinction, between smaller delinquencies and more atrocious crimes. For slighter offences require not the exertion of extreme severity: it is sufficient, to administer verbal castigation, and that with paternal gentleness, not calculated to exasperate or confound the offender, but to bring him to himself, that his correction may be an occasion of joy rather than of sorrow. But it is proper that flagitious crimes should receive severer punishment; for it is not enough for him who has grievously offended the Church by the bad example of an atrocious crime, merely to receive verbal castigation; he ought to be deprived of the communion of the Lord's Supper for a time, till he shall have given satisfactory evidence of repentance. For Paul not only employs verbal reproof against the Corinthian transgressor, but excludes him from the Church, and blames the Corinthians for having tolerated him so long. This order was retained in the ancient and purer Church, while any legitimate government continued. For if any one had perpetrated a crime which was productive of offence, he was commanded, in the first place, to abstain from the Lord's Supper, and in the next place, to humble himself

before God, and to testify his repentance before the Church. There were, likewise, certain solemn rites which it was customary to enjoin upon those who had fallen, as signs of their repentance. When the sinner had performed these for the satisfaction of the Church, he was then, by imposition of hands, readmitted to the communion. This readmission is frequently called *peace* by Cyprian, who briefly describes the ceremony. "They do penance," he says, "for a sufficient time; then they come to confession, and by the imposition of the hands of the bishop and clergy, are restored to the privilege of communion." But though the bishop and clergy presided in the reconciliation of offenders, yet they required the consent of the people; as Cyprian elsewhere states.

VII. From this discipline none were exempted; so that princes and plebeians yielded the same submission to it: and that with the greatest propriety, since it is evidently the discipline of Christ, to whom it is reasonable that all the sceptres and diadems of kings should be subject. Thus Theodosius, when Ambrose excluded him from the privilege of communion, on account of a massacre perpetrated at Thessalonica, laid aside the ensigns of royalty with which he was invested, publicly in the Church bewailed his sin which the deceitful suggestions of others had tempted him to commit, and implored pardon with groans and tears. For great kings ought not to think it any dishonour to prostrate themselves as suppliants before Christ the King of kings, nor ought they to be displeased at being judged by the Church. As they hear scarcely any thing in their courts but mere flatteries, it is the more highly necessary for them to receive correction from the Lord by the mouth of his *ministers*; they ought even to wish not to be spared by the *pastors*, that they may be spared by the Lord. I forbear to mention here by whom this jurisdiction is to be exercised, having spoken of this in another place. I will only add, that the legitimate process in excommunicating an offender, which is pointed out by Paul, requires it to be done, not by the elders alone, but with the knowledge and approbation of the Church: in such a manner, however, that the multitude of the people may



not direct the proceeding, but may watch over it as witnesses and guardians, that nothing may be done by a few persons from any improper motive. Beside the invocation of the name of God, the whole of the proceeding ought to be conducted with a gravity declarative of the presence of Christ, that there may be no doubt of his presiding over the sentence.

VIII. But it ought not to be forgotten, that the severity becoming the Church must be tempered with a spirit of gentleness. For there is constant need of the greatest caution, according to the injunction of Paul respecting a person who may have been censured, “lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with over much sorrow;” (*m*) for thus a remedy would become a poison. But the rule of moderation may be better deduced from the end intended to be accomplished: for as the design of excommunication is, that the sinner may be brought to repentance, and evil examples taken away, to prevent the name of Christ from being blasphemed, and other persons being tempted to imitation; if we keep these things in view, it will be easy to judge how far severity ought to proceed, and where it ought to stop. Therefore, when the sinner gives the Church a testimony of his repentance, and by this testimony, as far as in him lies, obliterates the offence; he is by no means to be pressed any further; and if he be pressed any further, the rigour is carried beyond its proper limits. In this respect, it is impossible to excuse the excessive austerity of the ancients, which was utterly at variance with the directions of the Lord, and led to the most dangerous consequences. For when they sentenced an offender to solemn penance, and exclusion from the holy communion sometimes for three, sometimes for four, sometimes for seven years, and sometimes for the remainder of life; what other consequence could result from it, but either great hypocrisy or extreme despair? In like manner, when any one had fallen a second time, the refusal to admit him to a second repentance, and his exclusion from the Church to the end of his life, was neither useful nor reason-

(*m*) 2 Cor. ii. 7.

able. Whoever considers the subject with sound judgment, therefore, will discover their want of prudence in this instance. But I would rather reprobate the general custom, than accuse all those who practised it; among whom it is certain that some were not satisfied, but they complied with it because it was not in their power to effect a reformation. Cyprian declares that it was not from his own choice that he was so rigorous. "Our patience," he says, "and kindness, and tenderness, is ready for all who come. I wish all to return into the Church: I wish all our fellow-soldiers to be assembled in the camp of Christ, and all our brethren to be received into the house of God our Father. I forgive every thing; I conceal much: from a zealous wish to collect all the brotherhood together, even the sins committed against God I examine not with rigid severity: and am scarcely free from fault myself, in forgiving faults more easily than I ought. With ready and entire affection I embrace those who return with penitence, confessing their sin with humble and sincere satisfaction." Chrysostom is rather more severe, yet he expresses himself thus: "If God is so kind, why is his priest determined to be so austere?" We know likewise what kindness Augustine exercised towards the Donatists, so that he hesitated not to receive into the bishoprics those who renounced their error; and that immediately after their repentance. But because a contrary system had prevailed, they were obliged to relinquish their own judgment, in order to follow the established custom.

IX. Now as it is required of the whole body of the Church, in chastising any one who has fallen, to manifest such gentleness and clemency as not to proceed to the extremity of rigour, but rather, according to the injunction of Paul, to "confirm their love toward him," (n) so it is the duty of every individual to moderate himself to the like tenderness and clemency. Such as are expelled from the Church, therefore, it is not for us to expunge from the number of the elect, or to despair of them as already lost. It is proper to consider them as strangers to the Church, and consequently

(n) 2 Cor. ii. 8.

from Christ, but this only as long as they remain in a state of exclusion. And even then, if they exhibit more appearance of obstinacy than of humility, still let us leave them to the judgment of God, hoping better things of them for the future than we discover at present, and not ceasing to pray to God on their behalf. And to comprehend all in a word, let us not condemn to eternal death the person himself, who is in the hand and power of God alone, but let us content ourselves with judging of the nature of his works according to the law of the Lord. While we follow this rule, we rather adhere to the judgment of God than pronounce our own. Let us not arrogate to ourselves any greater latitude of judging, unless we would limit the power and prescribe laws to the mercy of God, to whom, whenever it seemeth good, the worst of men are changed into the best, strangers are introduced, and foreigners are admitted into the Church. And this the Lord does, to frustrate the opinion, and repress the presumption of men, which would usurp the most unwarrantable liberty of judging, if it were left without any restraint.

X. When Christ promises that what his ministers bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, he limits the power of binding to the censure of the Church; by which those who are excommunicated are not cast into eternal ruin and condemnation, but, by hearing their life and conduct condemned, are also certified of their final condemnation, unless they repent. For excommunication differs from anathema: anathema, which ought to be very rarely, or never, resorted to, precluding all pardon, execrates a person, and devotes him to eternal perdition; whereas excommunication rather censures and punishes his conduct. And though it does at the same time punish the person, yet it is in such a manner, that by warning him of his future condemnation, it recalls him to salvation. If he obey, the Church is ready to re-admit him to its friendship, and to restore him to its communion. Therefore, though the discipline of the Church admits not of our friendly association and familiar intercourse with excommunicated persons, yet we ought to exert all the means in our power to promote their reformation, and their return to



the society and communion of the Church: as we are taught by the apostle, who says, " Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (o) Unless this tenderness be observed by the individual members as well as by the Church collectively, our discipline will be in danger of speedily degenerating into cruelty.

XI. It is also particularly requisite to the moderation of discipline, as Augustine observes in disputing with the Donatists, that private persons, if they see faults corrected with too little diligence by the council of elders, should not on that account immediately withdraw from the Church, and that the pastors themselves, if they cannot succeed according to the wishes of their hearts in reforming every thing that needs correction, should not, in consequence of this, desert the ministry, or disturb the whole Church with unaccustomed asperity. For there is much truth in his observation, that " whoever either corrects what he can by reproof; or what he cannot correct, excludes, without breaking the bond of peace; or what he cannot exclude, without breaking the bond of peace, censures with moderation and bears with firmness; he is free from the curse, and chargeable with no blame." In another passage he assigns the reason; because " all the pious order and method of ecclesiastical discipline ought constantly to regard the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; which the apostle commands to be kept by mutual forbearance; and without the preservation of which, the medicine of chastisement is not only superfluous, but even becomes pernicious, and consequently is no longer a medicine." Again; " He, who attentively considers these things, neither neglects severity of discipline for the preservation of unity, nor breaks the bond of fellowship by an intemperance of correction." He acknowledges indeed that it is not only the duty of the pastors to endeavour to purify the Church from every fault, but that it is likewise incumbent on every individual to exert all his influence for the same purpose: and he fully admits, that a person who neglects to admonish, reprove, and correct the wicked, though he nei-

(o) 2 Thess. iii. 15.

ther favours them nor unites in their sins, is nevertheless culpable in the sight of the Lord; but that he who sustains such an office as to have power to exclude them from a participation of the sacraments, and does it not, he is chargeable, in that case, not with the guilt of another, but with a sin of his own: he only recommends it to be done with the prudence required by our Lord, "lest while" they "gather up the tares," they "root up also the wheat with them." (*p*) Hence he concludes with Cyprian; "Let a man, therefore, in mercy, correct what he can; what he cannot, let him patiently bear, and affectionately lament."

XII. These remarks of Augustine were made in consequence of the rigour of the Donatists, who, seeing vices in the Church, which the bishops condemned by verbal reproofs, but did not punish with excommunication which they thought not adapted to produce any good effects, inveighed in a most outrageous manner against the bishops as betrayers of discipline, and by an impious schism separated themselves from the flock of Christ. The same conduct is pursued in the present day by the Anabaptists, who, acknowledging no congregation to belong to Christ, unless it be in all respects conspicuous for angelic perfection, under the pretext of zeal, destroy all edification. "Such persons," says Augustine, "not actuated by hatred against the iniquity of others, but stimulated by fondness for their own disputes, desire either wholly to pervert, or at least to divide the weak multitude by ensnaring them with their boastful pretensions: inflated with pride, infuriated with obstinacy, insidious with calumnies, turbulent with seditions, that their destitution of the light of truth may not be detected, they conceal themselves under the covert of a rigorous severity, and those things which the Scripture commands to be done for the correction of the faults of our brethren, without violating the sincerity of love, or disturbing the unity of peace, but with the moderation of a remedial process, they abuse, to an occasion of dissension and to the sacrilege of schism. Thus Satan transforms himself into an angel of light, when from

just severity he takes occasion to persuade men to inhuman cruelty, with no other object than to corrupt and break the bond of peace and unity; by the preservation of which among christians all his power to injure them is weakened, his insidious snares are broken, and his schemes for their ruin come to nothing.

XIII. There is one thing which this Father particularly recommends, that if the contagion of any sin has infected a whole people, there is a necessity for the severity and mercy which are combined in strict discipline. "For schemes of separation," he says, "are pernicious and sacrilegious, because they proceed from pride and impiety, and disturb the good who are weak, more than they correct the wicked who are bold." And what he here prescribes to others, he faithfully followed himself. For writing to Aurelius bishop of Carthage, he complained that drunkenness, which is so severely condemned in the Scripture, prevailed with impunity in Africa, and persuaded him to endeavour to remedy it by calling a provincial council. He immediately adds, "I believe these things are suppressed not by harshness, severity, or imperiousness, but by teaching rather than commanding, by admonitions rather than by menaces. For this is the conduct to be pursued with a multitude of offenders; but severity is to be exercised against the sins of a few." Yet he does not mean that bishops should connive or be silent, because they cannot inflict severe punishments for public crimes, as he afterwards explains; but he means that the connection should be tempered with such moderation, as to be salutary rather than injurious to the body. And therefore he at length concludes in the following manner: "Wherefore also that command of the apostle, to put away the wicked, (*q*) ought by no means to be neglected, when it can be done without danger of disturbing the peace; for in this case alone did he intend that it should be enforced: and we are also to observe his other injunction, to forbear one another in love, endeavouring to keep the spirit in the bond of peace." (*r*)

XIV. The remaining part of discipline, which is not

(*q*) 1 Cor. v. 13,

(*r*) Eph. iv. 2, 3.



strictly included in the power of the keys, consists in this; that the pastors, according to the necessity of the times, should exhort the people either to fastings or solemn supplications, or to other exercises of humility, repentance, and faith, of which the word of God prescribes neither the time, the extent, nor the form, but leaves all this to the judgment of the Church. The observation of these things also, which are highly useful, was always practised by the ancient Church from the days of the apostles; though the apostles themselves were not the first authors of them, but derived the example from the law and the prophets. For there we find, that whenever any important business occurred, the people were assembled, supplications commanded, and fasting enjoined. The apostles therefore followed what was not new to the people of God, and what they foresaw would be useful. The same reasoning is applicable to other exercises by which the people may be excited to duty or preserved in obedience. Examples abound in the sacred history, which it is unnecessary to enumerate. The conclusion to be deduced from the whole is, that whenever a controversy arises respecting religion which requires to be decided by a council or ecclesiastical judgment, whenever a minister is to be chosen, in short whenever any thing of difficulty or great importance is transacting; and also when any tokens of the divine wrath are discovered, such as famine, pestilence, or war; it is a pious custom, and beneficial in all ages, for the pastors to exhort the people to public fasts and extraordinary prayers. If the testimonies which may be adduced from the Old Testament be rejected, as inapplicable to the christian, it is evident that the apostles practised the same. Respecting prayers, however, I suppose scarcely a person will be found disposed to raise any dispute. Therefore let us say something of fasting; because many for want of knowing its usefulness, undervalue its necessity, and some reject it as altogether superfluous; while on the other hand, where the use of it is not well understood, it easily degenerates into superstition.

XV. Holy and legitimate fasting is directed to three ends. For we practise it, either as a restraint on the flesh, to preserve it from licentiousness, or as a preparation for prayers

and pious meditations, or as a testimony of our humiliation in the presence of God, when we are desirous of confessing our guilt before him. The first is not often contemplated in public fasting, because all men have not the same constitution or health of body; therefore it is rather more applicable to private fasting. The second end is common to both, such preparation for prayer being necessary to the whole Church, as well as to every one of the faithful in particular. The same may be said of the third. For it will sometimes happen that God will afflict a whole nation with war, pestilence, or some other calamity: under such a common scourge, it behoves all the people to make a confession of their guilt. When the hand of the Lord chastises an individual, he ought to make a similar confession, either alone or with his family. It is true that this acknowledgment lies principally in the disposition of the heart; but when the heart is affected as it ought to be, it can scarcely avoid breaking out into the external expression, and most especially when it promotes the general edification, in order that all, by a public confession of their sin, may unitedly acknowledge the justice of God, and may mutually animate each other by the influence of example.

XVI. Wherefore fasting, as it is a sign of humiliation, is of more frequent use in public, than among individuals in private; though it is common to both, as we have already observed. With regard to the discipline, therefore, of which we are now treating, whenever supplications are to be presented to God on any important occasion, it would be right to enjoin the union of fasting with prayer. Thus when the faithful at Antioch “laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas;” the better to recommend their very important ministry to God, they “fasted” as well as “prayed.”<sup>(s)</sup> So also when Paul and Barnabas afterwards “ordained elders in every Church,” they used to “pray with fasting.”<sup>(t)</sup> In this kind of fasting, their only object was, that they might be more lively and unembarrassed in prayer. And we find by experience, that after a full meal the mind does not aspire

<sup>(s)</sup> Acts xiii. 2, 3.      <sup>(t)</sup> Acts xiv. 23,

towards God so as to be able to enter on prayer, and to continue in it with seriousness and ardour of affection. So we are to understand what Luke says of Anna, that she “served God with fastings and prayers.” (*u*) For he does not place the worship of God in fasting, but signifies that by such means that holy woman habituated herself to a constancy in prayer. Such was the fasting of Nehemiah, when he prayed to God with more than common fervour for the deliverance of his people. (*v*) For this cause Paul declares it to be expedient for the faithful to practise a temporary abstinence from lawful enjoyments, that they may be more at liberty to “give themselves to fasting and prayer.” (*w*) For by connecting fasting with prayer as an assistance to it, he signifies that fasting is of no importance in itself any further than as it is directed to this end. Besides, from the direction which he gives in that place to husbands and wives, to “render to” each other “due benevolence,” it is clear that he is not speaking of daily prayers, but of such as require peculiar earnestness of attention.

XVII. In like manner, when war, pestilence, or famine begins to rage, or when any other calamity appears to threaten a country and people, then also it is the duty of pastors to exhort the Church to fasting, that with humble supplications they may deprecate the wrath of the Lord: for when he causes danger to appear, he announces himself as prepared and armed for vengeance. Therefore as it was anciently the custom for criminals to appear with long beards, dishevelled hair, and mourning apparel, in order to excite the pity of the judge; so when we stand as criminals before the tribunal of God, it is conducive to his glory and the general edification, as well as expedient and salutary for ourselves, to deprecate his severity by external demonstrations of sorrow. That this was customary among the people of Israel, it is easy to infer from the language of Joel; for when he commands to “blow the trumpet, sanctify a fast, and call a solemn assembly,” (*x*) and proceeds to give other directions, he speaks as of things commonly practised. He had just before

(*u*) Luke ii. 37.    (*v*) Neh. i. 4.    (*w*) 1 Cor. vii. 5.    (*x*) Joel ii. 15.



said that inquisition was made respecting the crimes of the people, had announced that the day of the Lord was at hand, and had cited them as criminals to appear and answer for themselves: afterwards, he warns them to have recourse to sackcloth and ashes, to weeping and mourning, that is, to prostrate themselves before the Lord with external demonstrations of humility. Sackcloth and ashes perhaps were more suitable to those times; but there is no doubt that assembling, and weeping, and fastings, and similar acts, are equally proper for us in the present age, whenever the state of our affairs requires them. For as it is a holy exercise, adapted both to humble men and to confess their humility, why should it be less used by us than by the ancients in similar necessities? We read that fasting in token of sorrow was not only practised by the Israelitish Church, which was formed and regulated by the word of God, but also by the inhabitants of Nineveh, who had no instruction except the preaching of Jonah. (y) What cause then is there, why we should not practise the same? But, it will be said, It is an external ceremony, which with all the rest terminated in Christ. I reply, that even at this day it is, as it always has been, a most excellent assistance and useful admonition to the faithful, to stimulate them, and guard them against further provocations of God by their carelessness and inattention, when they are chastised by his scourges. Therefore, when Christ excuses his apostles for not fasting, he does not say that fasting is abolished, but appoints it for seasons of calamity, and connects it with sorrow. "The days will come," says he, "when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them." (z)

XVIII. That there may be no mistake respecting the term, let us define what fasting is. For we do not understand it to denote mere temperance and abstinence in eating and drinking, but something more. The life of the faithful, indeed, ought to be so regulated by frugality and sobriety, as to exhibit, as far as possible, the appearance of a perpetual fast. But beside this, there is another temporary fast, when

(y) Jonah iii. 5.

(z) Matt. ix. 15. Luke v. 34, 35.

we retrench any thing from our customary mode of living, either for a day or for any certain time, and prescribe to ourselves a more than commonly rigid and severe abstinence in food. This restriction consists in three things, in time, in quality, and in quantity of food. By time, I mean that we should perform, while fasting, those exercises on account of which fasts are instituted. As for example, if any one fast for solemn prayer, he should not break his fast till he has attended to it. The quality consists in an entire abstinence from dainties, and content with simpler and humbler fare, that our appetite may not be stimulated by delicacies. The rule of quantity is, that we eat more sparingly and slightly than usual, only for necessity and not for pleasure.

XIX. But it is necessary for us above all things to be particularly on our guard against the approaches of superstition, which has heretofore been a source of great injury to the Church. For it were far better that fasting should be entirely disused, than that the practice should be diligently observed, and at the same time corrupted with false and pernicious opinions, into which the world is continually falling, unless it be prevented by the greatest fidelity and prudence of the pastors. The first caution necessary, and which they should be constantly urging, is that suggested by Joel; "Rend your heart and not your garments:" (*a*) that is, they should admonish the people, that God sets no value on fasting, unless it be accompanied with a correspondent disposition of heart, a real displeasure against sin, sincere self-abhorrence, true humiliation, and unfeigned grief arising from a fear of God; and that fasting is of no use on any other account than as an additional and subordinate assistance to these things. For nothing is more abominable to God, than when men attempt to impose upon him by the presentation of signs and external appearances, instead of purity of heart. Therefore he severely reprobates this hypocrisy in the Jews, who imagined they had satisfied God merely by having fasted, while they cherished impious and impure thoughts in their hearts. "Is it such a fast, saith the Lord,

(*a*) Joel ii. 13.

that I have chosen?" (*b*) The fasting of hypocrites, therefore, is not only superfluous and useless fatigue, but the greatest abomination. Allied to this, is another evil, which requires the most vigilant caution, lest it be considered as a meritorious act, or a species of divine service. For as it is a thing indifferent in itself, and possesses no other value than it derives from those ends to which it ought to be directed, it is most pernicious superstition to confound it with works commanded by God, and necessary in themselves, without reference to any ulterior object. Such was formerly the folly of the Manichæans, in the refutation of whom Augustine most clearly shews that fasting is to be held in no other estimation than on account of those ends which I here mention, and that it receives no approbation from God, unless it be practised for their sake. The third error is not so impious indeed, yet is pregnant with danger, to enforce it with extreme rigour as one of the principal duties, and to extol it with extravagant encomiums, so that men imagine themselves to have performed a work of peculiar excellence when they have fasted. In this respect I dare not wholly excuse the ancient fathers from having sown some seeds of superstition, and give occasion to the tyranny which afterwards arose. Their writings contain some sound and judicious sentiments on the subject of fasting; but they also contain extravagant praises which elevate it to a rank among the principal virtues.

XX. And the superstitious observance of Lent had at that time generally prevailed, because the common people considered themselves as performing an eminent act of obedience to God, and the pastors commended it as a holy imitation of Christ: whereas it is plain that Christ fasted, not to set an example to others, but in order that by such an introduction to the preaching of the gospel, he might prove the doctrine not to be a human invention, but a revelation from heaven. And it is surprising that men of acute discernment could ever entertain such a gross error, which is

(*b*) Isaiah lviii. 5.



disproved by such numerous and satisfactory arguments. For Christ did not fast often, which it was necessary for him to do, if he intended to establish a law for anniversary fasts, but only once, while he was preparing to enter on the promulgation of the gospel. Nor did he fast in the manner of men, as it behoved him to do, if he intended to stimulate men to an imitation of him; on the contrary, he exhibited an example calculated to attract the admiration of all, rather than to excite them to a desire of emulating his example. In short, there was no other reason for his fasting than for that of Moses, when he received the law from the hand of the Lord. For as that miracle was exhibited in Moses, to establish the authority of the law, it was necessary that it should not be omitted in Christ, lest the gospel should seem to be inferior to the law. But from that time, it never entered into any man's mind to introduce such a form of fasting among the people of Israel, under the pretext of imitating Moses; nor was it followed by any of the holy prophets and fathers, notwithstanding their inclination and zeal for all pious exercises. For the account of Elijah, that he lived forty days without meat and drink, was only intended to teach the people that he was raised up to be the restorer of the law, from which almost all Israel had departed. It was nothing but a vain and superstitious affectation, therefore, to dignify the fasting of Lent with the title and pretext of an imitation of Christ. In the manner of fasting, however, there was at that time a great diversity, as Cassiodorus relates, from Socrates in the ninth book of his history. "For the Romans," he says, "had no more than three weeks, but during these there was a continual fast, except on the Sunday and Saturday. The Illyrians and Greeks had six weeks, and others had seven; but they fasted at intervals. Nor did they differ less as to the nature of their food. Some made use of nothing but bread and water; others added vegetables; some did not abstain from fish and fowl; others made no distinction at all between any kinds of food." This diversity is also mentioned by Augustine, in his second epistle to Januarius.

**XXI.** The times which followed were still worse: to

the preposterous zeal of the multitude was added the ignorance and stupidity of the bishops, with their lust of dominion and tyrannical rigour. Impious laws were enacted to bind men's consciences with fatal chains. The eating of animal food was interdicted, as though it would contaminate them. Sacrilegious opinions were added one after another, till they arrived at an ocean of errors. And that no corruption might be omitted, they have begun to trifle with God by the most ridiculous pretensions to abstinence. For in the midst of all the most exquisite delicacies, they seek the praise of fasting; no dainties are then sufficient, they never have food in greater plenty, or variety, or deliciousness. Such splendid provision they call fasting, and imagine it to be the legitimate service of God. I say nothing of the base gluttony practised at that season, more than at any other time, by those who wish to pass for the greatest saints. In short, they esteem it the highest worship of God, to abstain from animal food, and with this exception, to indulge themselves in every kind of dainties. On the other hand, to taste the least morsel of bacon or salted meat and brown bread, they deem an act of the vilest impiety, and deserving of worse than death. Jerome relates, that there were some persons even in his time, who trifled with God by such fooleries; who, to avoid making use of oil, procured the most delicate kinds of food to be brought from every country; and who, to do violence to nature, abstained from drinking water, but procured delicious and costly liquors to be made for them, which they drank, not from a cup, but from a shell. What was then the vice of a few, is now become common among all wealthy persons; they fast for no other purpose than to feast with more than common sumptuousness and delicacy. But I have no inclination to waste many words on a thing so notorious. I only assert, that neither in their fastings, nor in any other parts of their discipline, have the Papists any thing so correct, sincere, or well-regulated, as to have the least occasion to pride themselves upon any thing being left among them worthy of praise.

XXII. There remains the second part of the discipline

of the Church, which particularly relates to the clergy. It is contained in the canons which the ancient bishops imposed on themselves and their order. Such as these : That no ecclesiastic should employ his time in hunting, gambling, or feasting ; that no one should engage in usury, or commerce ; that no one should be present at dissolute dances ; and other similar injunctions. Penalties were likewise annexed, to confirm the authority of the canons, and to prevent their being violated with impunity. For this end, to every bishop was committed the government of his clergy, to rule them according to the canons, and to oblige them to do their duty. For this purpose were instituted annual visitations and synods, that if any one were negligent in his duty, he might be admonished, and that any one who committed a fault might be corrected according to his offence. The bishops also had their provincial councils, one every year, and anciently even twice a year, by which they were judged, if they had committed any breach of their duty. For if a bishop was too severe or violent against his clergy, there was a right of appeal to the provincial councils, even though there was only a single complainant. The severest punishment was the deposition of the offender from his office, and his exclusion for a time from the communion. And because this was a perpetual regulation, they never used to dissolve a provincial council without appointing a time and place for the next. For to summon a universal council, was the exclusive prerogative of the emperor, as all the ancient records testify. As long as this severity continued, the clergy required nothing more from the people than they exemplified in their own conduct. Indeed, they were far more severe to themselves than to the laity : and it is reasonable that the people should be ruled with a milder and less rigid discipline ; and that the clergy should inflict heavier censures, and exercise far less indulgence to themselves than to other persons. How all this has become obsolete, it is unnecessary to relate, when nothing can be imagined more licentious and dissolute than this order of men in the present day ; and their profligacy has gone to such a length, that the whole world is ex-



claiming against them. That all antiquity may not appear to have been entirely forgotten by them, I confess, they deceive the eyes of the simple with certain shadows, but these bear no more resemblance to the ancient usages, than the mimicry of an ape to the rational and considerate conduct of men. There is a remarkable passage in Xenophon; where he states how shamefully the Persians had degenerated from the virtues of their ancestors, and from an austere course of life had sunk into delicacy and effeminacy, but that to conceal their shame they sedulously observed the ancient forms. For whereas in the time of Cyrus, sobriety and temperance were carried so far, that it was unnecessary, and was even considered as a disgrace, for any one to blow his nose, their posterity continued scrupulously to refrain from this act; but to absorb the mucus, and retain the fetid humours produced by their gluttony, even till they almost putrefied, was held quite allowable. So, according to the ancient rule, it was unlawful to bring cups to the table, but they had no objection to drink wine till they were obliged to be carried away drunk. It had been an established custom, to eat only one meal a day; these good successors had not abolished this custom, but they had continued their banquets from noon to midnight. Because their ancient law enjoined men to finish their day's journey fasting, it continued to be a permanent custom among them; but they were at liberty, and it was for the general practice, for the sake of avoiding fatigue, to contract the journey to two hours. Whenever the Papists bring forward their degenerate rules, for the purpose of shewing their resemblance to the holy fathers, this example will sufficiently expose their ridiculous imitation, of which no painter could draw a more striking likeness.

XXIII. In one instance, they are too rigorous and inflexible, that is, not permitting priests to marry. With what impunity fornication rages among them, it is unnecessary to remark; emboldened by their polluted celibacy, they have become hardened to every crime. Yet this prohibition clearly shews how pestilent are all their traditions: since it has not only deprived the Church of upright and able pastors,

but has formed a horrible gulf of enormities, and precipitated many souls into the abyss of despair. The interdiction of marriage to priests was certainly an act of impious tyranny, not only contrary to the word of God, but at variance with every principle of justice. In the first place, it was on no account lawful for men to prohibit that which the Lord had left free. Secondly, That God had expressly provided in his word that this liberty should not be infringed, is too clear to require much proof. I say nothing of the direction, repeatedly given by Paul, that a bishop should be "the husband of one wife:" (*d*) but what could be expressed with greater force, than where he announces a revelation from the Holy Spirit, "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, forbidding to marry," and represents these not only as impostors, but as disseminating "doctrines of devils." (*e*) This, therefore, was a prophecy, a sacred oracle of the Holy Spirit, by which he intended from the beginning to forearm the Church against dangers; that the prohibition of marriage is a doctrine of devils. But our adversaries imagine themselves to have admirably evaded this charge, when they misapply it to Montanus, the Tatianists, Encratites, and other ancient heretics. It refers, say they, to those who have condemned marriage altogether; we by no means condemn it; we merely prohibit it to the clergy, from an opinion that it is not proper for them. As if, though this prophecy had once been accomplished in those ancient heretics, it might not also be applicable to them, or as if this puerile cavil, that they do not prohibit marriage because they do not prohibit it to all, were deserving of the least attention. This is just as if a tyrant should contend that there can be no injustice in a law, the injustice of which only oppresses one part of a nation.

XXIV. They object, that there ought to be some mark to distinguish the clergy from the laity. As though the Lord did not foresee what are the true ornaments in which priests ought to excel. By this plea, they charge the apos-

(*d*) 1 Tim. iii. 2. Titus i. 6.

(*e*) 1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.

tle with disturbing the order, and violating the decorum of the Church, who, in delineating the perfect model of a good bishop, among the other virtues which he required in him, dared to mention marriage. I know that they interpret this to mean, that no one is chosen a bishop who shall have had a second wife. And I grant that this interpretation is not new, but that it is erroneous, is evident from the context itself; because he immediately after prescribes what characters the wives of bishops and deacons ought to possess. Paul places marriage among the virtues of a bishop; these men teach that it is a vice not to be tolerated in the clergy, and not content with this general censure, they call it carnal pollution and impurity, which is the language of Syricius, one of the pontiffs, recited in their canons. Let every man reflect from what source these things can have proceeded. Christ has been pleased to put such honour upon marriage, as to make it an image of his sacred union with the Church. What could be said more, in commendation of the dignity of marriage? With what face can that be called impure and polluted, which exhibits a similitude of the spiritual grace of Christ?

XXV. Now though their prohibition is so clearly repugnant to the word of God, yet they find something in the scriptures to urge in its defence. The Levitical priests, whenever it came to their turn to minister at the altar, were required not to cohabit with their wives, that they might be pure and immaculate to perform the sacrifices; it would therefore be exceedingly unbecoming for our sacraments, which are far more excellent and of daily recurrence, to be administered by married men. As though the evangelical ministry and the levitical priesthood were one and the same office. On the contrary, the Levitical priests were antitypes, representing Christ, who, as the Mediator between God and man, was to reconcile the Father to us by his perfect purity. Now as it was impossible for sinners to exhibit in every respect a type of his sanctity, yet in order to display some faint shadows of it, they were commanded to purify themselves in a manner beyond what is common among men,



whenever they approached the sanctuary; because on those occasions they properly represented Christ, in appearing at the tabernacle, which was a type of the heavenly tribunal, as mediators to reconcile the people to God. As the pastors of the Church now sustain no such office, the comparison is nothing to the purpose. Wherefore the apostle, without any exception, confidently pronounces, that "marriage is honourable in all; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." (*f*) And the apostles themselves have proved by their own example, that marriage is not unbecoming the sanctity of any office however excellent: for Paul testifies that they not only retained their wives, but took them about with them. (*g*)

XXVI. It has also betrayed egregious impudence, to insist on this appearance of chastity as a necessary thing, to the great disgrace of the ancient Church, which abounded with such peculiar divine knowledge, but was still more eminent for sanctity. For if they pay no regard to the apostles, whom they often have the hardihood to treat with contempt, what will they say of all the ancient fathers, who, it is certain, not only tolerated marriage in bishops, but likewise approved of it? It would follow that they must have practised a foul profanation of sacred things, since according to the notion we are opposing, they did not celebrate the mysteries of the Lord with the requisite purity. The injunction of celibacy was agitated in the council of Nice; for there are never wanting little minds absorbed in superstition, who endeavour to make themselves admired by the invention of some novelty. But what was the decision? The council coincided in the opinion of Paphnutius, who pronounced that, "a man's cohabitation with his own wife is chastity." Therefore marriage continued to be held sacred among them, nor was it esteemed any disgrace to them, or considered as casting any blemish on the ministry.

XXVII. Afterwards followed times distinguished by a most superstitious admiration of celibacy. Hence those

(*f*) Heb. xiii. 4.

(*g*) 1 Cor. ix. 5.

frequent and extravagant encomiums on virginity, with which scarcely any other virtue was in general deemed worthy to be compared. And though marriage was not condemned as impure, yet its dignity was so diminished, and its sanctity obscured, that he who did not refrain from it was not considered as aspiring to perfection with sufficient fortitude of mind. Hence those canons, which prohibited the contraction of marriage by those who had already entered on the office of priests; and succeeding ones, which prohibited the admission to that office of any but such who had never been married, or who had abjured all cohabitation with their wives. Because these things seemed to add respectability to the priesthood, they were received, I confess, even in early times with great applause. But our adversaries object antiquity against us. I answer; In the first place, in the days of the apostles, and for several ages after, the bishops were at liberty to marry, and the apostles themselves, as well as other pastors of the highest reputation who succeeded them, made use of this liberty without any difficulty. The example of the primitive Church we ought to hold in higher estimation than to deem that unlawful or unbecoming which was then received and practised with approbation. Secondly; even that age, which from a superstitious attachment to virginity, began to be more unfavourable to marriage, did not impose the law of celibacy upon the priests as if it were absolutely necessary, but because they preferred celibacy to marriage. Lastly; this law did not require the compulsion of continence in those who were not able to keep it; for while the severest punishments were denounced on priests who were guilty of fornication, those who married were merely dismissed from their office.

XXVIII. Therefore, whenever the advocates of this modern tyranny attempt to defend their celibacy with the pretext of antiquity, we shall not fail to reply, that they ought to restore the ancient chastity in their priests, to remove all adulterers and fornicators, not to suffer those whom they forbid the virtuous and chaste society of a wife, to abandon themselves with impunity to every kind of debauchery, to revive

the obsolete discipline by which all indecencies may be repressed, to deliver the Church from this flagitious turpitude, by which it has been so long deformed. When they shall have granted this, it will still be necessary to admonish them not to impose that as necessary, which being free in itself depends on the convenience of the Church. Yet I have not made these observations from an opinion that we ought on any condition to admit those canons which impose the obligation of celibacy on the clergy, but to enable the more judicious to perceive the effrontery of our adversaries in alleging the authority of antiquity to bring disgrace on holy marriage in priests. With respect to the Fathers, whose writings are extant, with the exception of Jerome, they have not so malignantly detracted from the virtue of marriage, when they have been expressing their own sentiments. We shall content ourselves with one testimony of Chrysostom, because he who was a principal admirer of virginity, cannot be supposed to have been more lavish than others in commendation of marriage. He says, "The first degree of chastity is pure virginity; the second is faithful marriage. Therefore the second species of virginity is the chaste love of matrimony."



## CHAPTER XIII.

*Vows: the Misery of rashly making them.*

IT is a thing truly to be deplored, that the Church, after its liberty had been purchased by the inestimable price of the blood of Christ, should have been so oppressed with a cruel tyranny, and almost overwhelmed with an immense mass of traditions; but the general frenzy of individuals shews that it has not been without the justest cause that God hath permitted so much to be done by Satan and his ministers. For it was not sufficient for them to neglect the command of Christ, and to endure every burden imposed on them by false teachers, unless they respectively added some of their own, and so sunk themselves deeper in pits of their own digging. This was the consequence of their rivalling each other in the contrivance of vows to add a stronger and stricter obligation to the common bonds. As we have shewn that the service of God was corrupted by the audacity of those who domineered over the church under the title of pastors, ensnaring unhappy consciences with their unjust laws; it will not be irrelevant here to expose a kindred evil, in order to shew that men, in the depravity of their hearts, have opposed every possible obstacle to those means by which they ought to have been conducted to God. Now to make it more evident that vows have been productive of the most serious mischiefs, it is necessary to remind the readers of the principles already stated. In the first place, we have shewn that every thing necessary to the regulation of a pious and holy life is comprehended in the law. We have also shewn, that the Lord, in order to call us off more effectually from the contrivance of new works, has included all the praise of righteousness in the simple obedience of his will. If these things be true, the conclusion is obvious, that all the services which we invent for the purpose of gaining the favour of God, are not at all acceptable to him, whatever pleasure they may afford to ourselves: and, in fact, the Lord himself, in various places, not only openly rejects them, but declares

them to be objects of his utter abomination. Hence arises a doubt respecting vows which are made without the authority of the express word of God, in what light they are to be considered; whether they may be rightly made by Christian men, and how far they are obligatory upon them. For what is styled a *promise* among men, in reference to God is called a *vow*. Now we promise to men either such things as we think will be agreeable to them, or such as we owe them on the ground of duty. There is need, therefore, of far greater care respecting vows, which are addressed to God himself, towards whom we ought to act with the utmost seriousness. But here superstition has prevailed, in all ages, to a wonderful degree, so that, without judgment, or discretion, men have precipitately vowed to God whatever was uppermost in their minds, or even on their lips. Hence those fooleries, and even monstrous absurdities of vows, by which the heathens insolently trifled with their gods. And I sincerely wish that Christians had not imitated them in such audacity. This ought never to have been the case; but we see, that for several ages nothing has been more common than this presumption: amidst a general contempt of the law of God, people have been all inflamed with a mad passion for vowing whatever had delighted them in their dreams. I have no wish to proceed to an odious exaggeration, or a particular enumeration of the enormity and varieties of this offence; but I have thought it proper to make these remarks by the way, to shew that we are not instituting an unnecessary discussion, when we treat of vows.

II. If we would avoid any error in judging what vows are legitimate, and what are preposterous, it is necessary to consider three things: first, to whom vows are to be addressed; secondly, who we are that make vows; lastly, with what intention vows are made. The first consideration calls us to reflect, that we have to do with God; who takes such pleasure in our obedience, that he pronounces a curse on all acts of will-worship, however specious and splendid they may be in the eyes of men. If God abominates all voluntary services invented by us without his command, it follows, that nothing can be acceptable to him, except what is approved by his word. Let us not, therefore,

assume to ourselves such a great liberty, as to presume to vow to God any thing that has no testimony of his approbation. For the maxim of Paul, that “whatsoever is not of faith, is sin,” (a) while it extends to every action, is without doubt principally applicable when a man addresses his thoughts directly to God. Paul is there arguing respecting the difference of meats, and if we err and fall even in things of the least moment, where we are not enlightened by the certainty of faith; how much greater modesty is requisite when we are undertaking a business of the greatest importance! For nothing ought to be of greater importance to us than the duties of religion. Let this then be our first rule in regard to vows; never to attempt vowing any thing without a previous conviction of conscience, that we are attempting nothing rashly. And our conscience will be secure from all danger of rashness, when it shall have God for its guide, dictating, as it were, by his word, what it is proper or useless to do.

III. The second consideration which we have mentioned, calls us to measure our strength, to contemplate our calling, and not to neglect the liberty which God hath conferred on us. For he who vows what is not in his power, or is repugnant to his calling, is chargeable with rashness; and he who despises the favour of God, by which he is constituted lord of all things, is guilty of ingratitude. By this remark, I do not intend that we have any thing in our power, so as to enable us to promise it to God in a reliance on our own strength. For, with the strictest regard to truth, it was decreed in the council of Arausium, that nothing is rightly vowed to God but what we have received from his hand, seeing that all the things which are presented to him are merely gifts which he has imparted. But as some things are given to us by the goodness of God, and other things are denied to us by his justice, let every man follow the admonition of Paul, and consider the measure of grace which he has received. (b) My only meaning here, therefore, is, that vows ought to be regulated by that measure which the Lord prescribes to us by what he has given us; lest, by attempting more than he permits, we

(a) Rom. xiv. 23.

(b) Rom. xii. 3. 1 Cor. xii. 11.



precipitate ourselves into danger, by arrogating too much to ourselves. Luke gives us an example in those assassins who vowed "that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul:" (c) even though the design itself had not been criminal, yet it would have betrayed intolerable rashness, to make a man's life and death subject to their power. So Jephthah suffered the punishment of his folly, when, in the fervour of precipitation, he made an inconsiderate vow. (d) In vows of this class, distinguished by mad presumption, that of celibacy holds the pre-eminence. Priests, monks, and nuns, forgetting their infirmity, think themselves capable of celibacy. But by what revelation have they been taught that they shall preserve their chastity all their life-time, to the end of which their vow reaches? They hear the declaration of God concerning the universal condition of man: "It is not good for man to be alone." (e) They understand, and I wish they did not feel, that sin remaining in us is attended with the most powerful stimulants. With what confidence can they dare to reject that general calling for their whole life-time, whereas the gift of continence is frequently bestowed for a certain time, as opportunity requires? In such obstinacy let them not expect God to assist them, but rather let them remember what is written: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (f) Now it is tempting God, to strive against the nature which he hath implanted in us, and to despise the gifts which he presents, as though they were not at all suitable for us. And they not only do this, but even marriage itself, which God hath deemed it no degradation of his majesty to institute, which he hath pronounced to be "honourable in all," which our Lord Jesus Christ sanctified with his presence, which he deigned to dignify with his first miracle, they are not ashamed to stigmatize as pollution, for the mere purpose of extolling celibacy, however it may be spent, with the most extravagant encomiums. As though they did not exhibit a striking proof in their own lives, that celibacy is one thing, and that virginity is another: and yet they have the consummate impudence to call such a life, angelic. This is cer-

(c) Acts xxiii. 12.

(d) Judges xi. 30—40.

(e) Gen. ii. 18.

(f) Deut. vi. 16. Matt. iv. 7.

tainly doing a great injury to the angels of God, to whom they compare persons guilty of fornication, adultery, and other crimes far more atrocious and impure. And there is not the least need of arguments, when they are clearly convicted by the fact itself. For it is very evident what dreadful punishments the Lord generally inflicts on such arrogance, self-confidence, and contempt of his gifts. Modesty forbids me to animadvert on those things which are more secret, of which too much is already known. That we are not at liberty to vow any thing which may hinder us from serving God in our vocation, is beyond all controversy: as if a father of a family should vow that he will desert his wife and children, to undertake some other charge; or as if a person qualified to fill the office of magistrate, on being chosen to it, should vow that he would remain in a private station. But the observation we have made, that our liberty ought not to be despised, has some difficulty, which requires a further explication. Now the meaning may be briefly explained in the following manner. As God hath constituted us lords of all things, and hath placed them in subjection to us, in order that we might use them all for our accommodation, we have no reason to hope that we should perform a service acceptable to God, by making ourselves slaves to external things, which ought to be subservient to our assistance. I say this, because some persons consider themselves entitled to the praise of humility, if they entangle themselves with many observances, from which the Lord, for the best of reasons, intended we should be exempt. Therefore, if we would escape this danger, let us always remember, that we are never to depart from that economy which the Lord hath instituted in the Christian Church.

IV. I proceed now to the third consideration which I mentioned; that it is of great importance with what intention a vow is made, if we wish it to be approved by God. For as the Lord regards the heart, and not the external appearance, it happens that the same action, performed with different designs, is sometimes acceptable to him, and sometimes highly displeasing. If any one vow abstinence from wine, as if there were any holiness in such abstinence, he is chargeable with su-

perstition; if this be done for any other end which is not improper, no one can disapprove of it. Now, as far as I am able to judge, there are four ends to which our vows may be rightly directed. For the sake of further elucidation, I refer two of them to the time past, and the other two to the future. To the time past belong those vows by which we either testify our gratitude to God for benefits received, or, in order to deprecate his wrath, inflict punishment on ourselves for sins that we have committed. The former may be called vows of thanksgiving; the latter, vows of penitence. Of the former we have an example in Jacob, who vowed to give to God the tenth of all he should acquire, if the Lord would bring him again from his exile to his father's house in peace. (g) We have other examples of the same kind in the ancient peace-offerings, which used to be vowed by pious kings and generals, entering on just wars, to be offered in case they should obtain the victory; or by persons labouring under more than common difficulty, in case the Lord would deliver them. Thus we are to understand all those places in the Psalms which speak of vows. (h) Vows of this kind may also be now used among us, whenever God delivers us from any great calamity, from a severe disease, or from any other danger. For on such occasions, it is not inconsistent with the duty of a pious man to consecrate to God some oblation that he has vowed, merely as a solemn token of grateful acknowledgment, that he may not appear unthankful for his goodness. The nature of the second species of vows will sufficiently appear from only one familiar example. If a person has fallen into any crime through the vice of intemperance, nothing prevents him from correcting that vice by a temporary renunciation of all delicacies, and enforcing this abstinence by a vow, to lay himself under the stronger obligation. Yet I impose no perpetual law on those who have been guilty of such an offence; I only point out what they are at liberty to do, if they think that such a vow would be useful to them. I consider a vow of this kind, therefore, as lawful, but, at the same time, as left to the free choice of every individual.

(g) Gen. xxviii. 20—22.

(h) Psalm xxii. 25. lvi. 12. cxvi. 14, 19.



V. Vows which regard the future, as I have observed, have for their object, partly to render us more cautious of danger, partly to stimulate us to the performance of duty. For example: a person perceives himself to be so prone to a certain vice, that, in something not otherwise evil, he cannot restrain himself from falling into sin, he will commit no absurdity, if he should deny himself the use of that thing for a season by a vow. If any one be convinced that this or the other ornament of dress is dangerous to him, and yet feel excessive desire for it, he cannot do better than restrain himself by imposing a necessity of abstinence, in order to free himself from all hesitation. So, if any one be forgetful or negligent of the necessary duties of piety, why may he not arouse his memory, and shake off his negligence by the imposition of a vow? In both cases, I confess, there is an appearance of pupillage; but, considered as helps of infirmity, such vows may be used with advantage by the inexperienced and imperfect. Vows, therefore, which respect one of these ends, especially those relating to external things, we shall affirm to be lawful, if they be supported by the approbation of God, if they be suitable to our calling, and if they be limited by the ability of grace which God hath given us.

VI. It will not now be difficult to conclude what ideas ought to be entertained of vows universally. There is one vow common to all the faithful, which is made in baptism, and confirmed and established by us in the profession of our faith in the Catechism, and in the reception of the Lord's Supper. For the sacraments resemble covenants, or instruments of agreement, by which God conveys his mercy to us, and in it eternal life, and we, on the other hand, promise him obedience. Now the form, or at least the sum of the vow is, that, renouncing Satan, we devote ourselves to the service of God, to obey his holy commands, and not to follow the corrupt inclinations of the flesh. This vow being sanctioned by the Scripture, and even required of all the children of God, it ought not to be doubted that it is holy and useful. It is no objection to this, that no man in the present life performs the perfect obedience which God requires of us: for as this stipulation is included in the covenant of grace, which contains both remission of sins and the spirit of sanctification, the promise which we then make is connected

with, and presupposes our supplication for mercy, and our solicitation for assistance. In judging of particular vows, it is necessary to remember the three rules which we have given, which will enable us to form a correct estimate of the nature of every vow. Yet I would not be thought to carry my recommendation, even of those vows which I maintain to be holy, so far as to wish their daily use. For though I venture to determine nothing respecting the number or time, yet, if any person would follow my advice, he will make none but such as are sober, and of short duration. For if any one often recur to the making of many vows, all religion will be injured by their frequency, and there will be great danger of falling into superstition. If any one bind himself by a perpetual vow, he will not discharge it without great trouble and difficulty; or, wearied by its long continuance, he will at length violate it altogether.

VII. Now it is evident what great superstition has for some ages prevailed in the world on this subject. One person vowed that he would drink no wine; as though abstinence from wine were a service in itself acceptable to God. Another obliged himself to fast; another to abstain from meat on certain days, which he had falsely imagined to possess some peculiar sanctity beyond others. There were some vows far more puerile, though not made by children. For it was esteemed great wisdom to vow pilgrimages to places of more than common holiness, and to perform the journey, either on foot, or with the body half naked, that the merit might be augmented by the fatigue. These, and similar vows, with an incredible rage for which the world has long been inflamed, examined according to the rules which we have laid down, will not only be found to be vain and nugatory, but replete with manifest impiety. For whatever may be the judgment of the flesh, God holds nothing in greater abomination than services of human invention. The following pernicious and execrable opinions are also entertained: hypocrites, when they have performed these fooleries, suppose themselves to have attained a high degree of righteousness; they place the whole substance of piety in external observances; and they despise all who discover less concern about these things than themselves.

VIII. To enumerate all the particular kinds of vows, would

answer no good purpose. But, because monastic vows are held in very high veneration, as they seemed to be sanctioned by the public authority of the church, it is proper to make a few brief remarks respecting them. In the first place, that no one may defend monachism, as it exists in the present day, under the pretence of ancient and long-continued prescription, it must be observed, that the mode of life in monasteries, in ancient times was very different from what it is now. They were the retreats of those who wished to habituate themselves to the greatest austerity and patience: for the discipline attributed to the Lacedæmonians, under the laws of Lycurgus, was equalled, and even considerably exceeded in rigour, by that which was then practised among the monks. They slept on the ground without any beds or couches; they drank nothing but water; their food consisted entirely of bread, herbs, and roots; their principal dainties were oil, pease, and beans. They abstained from all delicacy of victuals and ornaments of the body. These things might be thought incredible, if they were not attested by persons who saw and experienced them, Gregory of Nazianzum, Basil, and Chrysostom. But it was by such probationary discipline that they prepared themselves for higher offices. For that the monastic colleges were at that time the seminaries, from which the Church was furnished with ministers, is sufficiently evident from the examples of those whom we have mentioned, who were all educated in monasteries, and from that situation were called to the episcopal office, as well as of many other great and excellent men of their age. And Augustine shews that the same custom of supplying ministers for the Church from the monasteries continued in his time; for the monks of the island of Capraria are addressed by him in the following manner: "We exhort you in the Lord, brethren, that you keep your purpose, and persevere to the end; and that, if at any time your mother the Church shall have need of your labour, you neither undertake the charge with eager pride, nor refuse it with flattering indolence: but that you obey God with gentleness of heart; not preferring your leisure to the necessities of the Church, whom, if no good men had been disposed to assist in the production of her children, you cannot discover how you could yourselves have been born." He here speaks of the minis-



try, which is the means of the regeneration of the faithful. Again, in an epistle to Aurelius, he says; "It causes an occasion of falling to themselves, and a most injurious indignity to the ecclesiastical order, if the deserters of monasteries are chosen to clerical offices; while of those who remain in the monastery, we are accustomed to promote to such offices only the best and most approved. Unless, perhaps, as the common people say, A bad dancer is a good musician, so it should be jocularly said of us, A bad monk will be a good minister. It is too much to be lamented, if we stimulate monks to such ruinous pride, and think the clergy deserving of such heavy disgrace; whereas, sometimes even a good monk will hardly make a good priest, if he has sufficient continence, and yet is deficient in necessary learning." From these passages it appears that pious men were accustomed to prepare themselves, by monastic discipline, for the government of the Church, that they might be the better qualified to undertake such an important office. Not that all monks attained this end, or even aimed at it, for they were in general illiterate men; but those who were qualified were selected.

IX. But Augustine has given us a portraiture of the ancient monachism, principally in two places: in his treatise *On the Manners of the Catholic Church*, in which he defends the sanctity of that profession against the calumnies of the Manichæans; and in another book, *On the Labour of Monks*, in which he inveighs against some degenerate monks who had begun to corrupt their order. The different things which he states, I shall here collect in a brief summary, using, as far as possible, his own words. "Despising the allurements of this world, united in a common life of the strictest chastity and holiness, they spend their time together, living in prayers, in readings, and in conferences, neither inflated with pride, nor turbulent with obstinacy, nor pale with envy. No one possesses any thing of his own; no one is burdensome to another. By the labour of their hands, they procure those things which are sufficient to support the body without hindering the mind from devotion to God. Their work they deliver to those who are called Deans. These Deans dispose of every thing with great care, and render an account to one, whom they call Father. Most holy in their man-

ners, pre-eminent in divine learning, and excelling in every virtue, these Fathers, without any pride, consult the welfare of those whom they call children, commanding them with great authority, and obeyed by them with great cheerfulness. At the close of the day, while yet fasting, every one comes forth from his cell, and they all assemble to hear the Father; and each of these Fathers is surrounded by at least three thousand men," (he is speaking chiefly of Egypt and the East); "there they take some bodily refreshment, as much as is sufficient for life and health: every one restraining his appetite that he may make but a sparing use even of the provisions placed before him, which are in small quantities and of the plainest description. That they not only abstain from animal food and from wine, in order to repress libidinous desires, but from such things as stimulate the appetite with greater power, in proportion to the opinion entertained by some persons of their purity: under which pretence a vile longing after exquisite meats, with the exception of animal food, is wont to be ridiculously and shamefully defended. Whatever remains beyond their necessary food, and the surplus is considerable, both from the diligence of their hands and from the abstemiousness of their meals, is distributed to the poor, with greater care than if it had been earned by those who distribute it. For they are not anxious to have an abundance of these things, but all their concern is, that none of their abundance may remain with them." Afterwards, having mentioned their austerity, of which he had seen examples at Milan and other places, he says, "In these circumstances, no one is urged to austerities which he is unable to bear; there is no imposition on any one, of that which he refuses; nor is he condemned by the rest, because he confesses himself too weak to imitate them: for they remember the high commendations given of charity; they remember that to the pure, all things are pure. (*i*) Therefore all their industry is exerted, not in rejecting certain kinds of food as polluted, but in subduing concupiscence and preserving the love of the brethren. They remember that it is said, Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them. (*k*) Yet many strong persons abstain on account of the

(*i*) Titus i. 15.(*k*) 1 Cor. vi. 13.

weak. Many have a different reason for doing it; they are fond of living on meaner and less sumptuous food. These persons, therefore, who are abstemious when in perfect health, if a state of indisposition requires, partake, without any fear, when they are sick. Many drink no wine, but this is not from an apprehension of being defiled with it; for they most humanely cause it to be given to those who are languid, and cannot obtain health of body without it; and some who foolishly refuse it, they admonish, with brotherly affection, to beware lest their vain superstition debilitate them rather than promote their holiness. Thus they diligently exercise themselves in piety; but they know that the exercise of the body extends only to a short time. Charity is principally observed; to charity the food, the conversation, the apparel, the countenance is subservient. They all assemble and combine into one charity; to violate this, is accounted unlawful, and a sin against God; if any one resist charity, he is expelled and shunned; if any one offend against it, he is not suffered to remain a single day." As Augustine appears, in these passages, to have exhibited a portraiture of the true character of ancient monachism, I have thought proper, notwithstanding their length, to insert them here; for I saw that, however I might study brevity, yet I should go into still greater length, if I were to collect the same things from different authors.

X. My design here is not to pursue the whole argument, but merely to point out, by the way, the characters of the monks who belonged to the ancient Church, and the nature of the monastic profession at that period, that the judicious readers may be able, from a comparison, to judge of the effrontery of those who plead antiquity in support of the monachism of the present day. When Augustine gives us a description of holy and legitimate monachism, he excludes from it all rigid exaction or imposition of those things which the Lord in his word hath left free. But there is nothing at the present day more severely enforced. For they consider it a crime, never to be expiated, for any one to deviate in the minutest particular from the rules prescribed in the colour or shape of their apparel, the kind of food, or other frivolous and uninteresting ceremonies. Augustine strenuously contends, that it is not lawful for monks to live in idleness at the



expense of others. He denies that there was such an example to be found in his time in any well-regulated monastery. The present monks place the principal part of their sanctity in idleness. For if they were divested of idleness, what would become of that contemplative life, in which they boast of excelling other men, and of making near approaches to the life of angels? In fine, Augustine requires a monachism which would be no other than an exercise and assistance in the duties of piety, which are enjoined on all christians. What? when he represents charity as the principal and almost only rule of it, can we suppose him to be commending a conspiracy, by which a few men are closely united to each other, and separated from the whole body of the Church? on the contrary, he would have them to enlighten others by their example, in order to the preservation of the unity of the Church. In both these respects the nature of modern monachism is so different, that it is scarcely possible to find any thing more dissimilar or opposite. For, not content with that piety, to the study of which Jesus Christ commands his servants constantly to devote themselves, our present monks imagine I know not what new kind of piety, in the meditation of which they are become more perfect than all others.

XI. If they deny this, I would wish them to inform me why they dignify their order alone with the title of *perfection*, and deny this character to all the callings appointed by God? I am not unacquainted with their sophistical solution, that it is so called, not as containing perfection in it, but because it is the best calculated of all callings for the attainment of perfection. When they wish to elevate themselves in the estimation of the people, to intrap inexperienced and ignorant youths, to assert their privileges, to extol their own dignity to the degradation of others, they boast of being in a state of perfection. When they are so closely pressed, that they cannot defend such empty arrogance, they have recourse to this subterfuge, that they have not yet attained perfection, but that they are in a condition more favourable than any others for aspiring towards it. In the mean time they retain the admiration of the people, as though the monastic life, and that alone, were angelic, perfect, and purified from every blemish. Under this pretext they carry on a most lucra-

tive traffic; but their moderation lies buried in a few books. Who does not see that this is an intolerable mockery? But let us argue the case as if they really attributed no higher honour to their profession, than to call it a state adapted to the attainment of perfection. Still, by giving it this designation, they distinguish it as by a peculiar mark from all other modes of life. And who can bear that such honour should be transferred to an institution, which has never received from God even a single syllable of approbation, and that such indignity should be cast on all the other callings of God, which have not only been enjoined but adorned with signal commendations by his most holy word. And what an outrageous insult is offered to God, when a mere human invention is preferred beyond all the kinds of life which he hath appointed and celebrated by his own testimony!

XII. Now let them charge me with a calumny in what I have already alleged, that they are not content with the rule which God has prescribed to his servants. Though I were silent on the subject, they furnish more than sufficient ground for their own accusation: for they openly teach that they take upon themselves a greater burden than Christ laid upon his disciples, because they promise to keep the evangelical counsels; which inculcate the love of our enemies, and prohibit the desire of revenge and profane swearing, and which, they say, are not binding on Christians at large. What antiquity will they plead here? This notion never entered into the mind of one of the ancients. They all with one consent declare that there was not a syllable uttered by Christ, which we are not bound to obey: and without any hesitation they uniformly and expressly represent the passages in question as commands, which these sagacious interpreters pretend to have been delivered by Christ merely as counsels. But as we have already shewn that this is a most pestilent error, it may suffice to have briefly remarked here, that the monachism, which exists at present, is founded on the opinion, which justly deserves to be execrated by all the faithful; that some rule of life may be imagined more perfect than the common one given by God to all the Church. Whatever superstructure is raised on this foundation, cannot but be abominable.

XIII. But they adduce another argument in proof of their

perfection, which they consider as most conclusive: our Lord said to the young man who inquired what was the perfection of righteousness, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." (*l*) Whether they do this, I shall not now dispute; let us at present put the case that they do. They boast therefore that they have been made perfect by forsaking all that they have. If the whole of perfection consist in this, what does Paul mean, when he says, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, I am nothing?" (*m*) What kind of perfection is that which is reduced to nothing by the absence of charity? Here they will be obliged to answer, that though this is the principal, yet it is not the only work of perfection. But here also they are contradicted by Paul, who hesitates not to make "charity," without any such renunciation, "the bond of perfection." (*n*) If it is certain, that there is no discordance between the Master and the disciple, and Paul explicitly denies the perfection of a man to consist in the renunciation of his property, and on the other hand asserts that it may exist without that relinquishment, it is necessary to examine in what sense we are to understand the declaration of Christ, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast." Now there will be no obscurity in the sense, if we consider, what ought always to be considered in all the discourses of Christ, to whom the words are addressed. A young man inquires, "What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" (*o*) As the question related to works, Christ refers him to the law; and that justly, for considered in itself, it is the way of eternal life, and is no otherwise insufficient to conduct us to salvation, than in consequence of our depravity. By this answer Christ declared, that he taught no other system of life than that which had anciently been delivered in the law of God. Thus he at the same time gave a testimony to the divine law as the doctrine of perfect righteousness, and precluded all calumnies, that he might not appear, by inculcating a new rule of life, to incite the people to a departure from the law. The young man, not indeed from badness of heart, but infected with vain confidence, replies respecting the precepts of

(*l*) Matt. xix. 21.(*m*) 1 Cor. xiii. 3.(*n*) Col. iii. 14.(*o*) Matt. xix. 16.



the law, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." (p) It is certain beyond all doubt, that he was at an immense distance from that which he boasted of having attained: and had his boast been true, he would have wanted nothing necessary to complete perfection. For it has been already proved that the law contains in itself a perfect righteousness; and it appears from this passage that the observance of it is called *the entrance* into eternal life. To teach him how little proficiency he had made in that righteousness, which he too confidently replied that he had fulfilled, it was necessary to investigate and expose a vice which lay concealed in his heart. He abounded in riches, and his heart was fixed on them. Because he was not sensible of this secret wound, therefore, Christ probes it. "Go," says he, "sell all that thou hast." If he had been so good an observer of the law as he imagined, he would not have gone away sorrowful on hearing this answer. For he who loves God with all his heart, not only esteems as worthless whatever is inconsistent with his love, but also abominates it as pernicious. Therefore when Christ commands a rich and avaricious man to relinquish all his wealth, it is just the same as if he commanded an ambitious man to renounce all his honours, a voluptuous man to abandon all his delicacies, and an unchaste man to forsake all the instruments of temptation. Thus consciences, which receive no impression from general admonitions, require to be recalled to a particular sense of their own guilt. It is in vain therefore to extend this particular argument to a general maxim, as though Christ placed all the perfection of man in the renunciation of his possessions, whereas he only meant by this direction to drive this young man, who betrayed such excessive self-complacency, into a sense of his malady, that he might perceive himself to be still very far from the perfect obedience of the law, to which he arrogantly and falsely pretended. I confess that this passage was misunderstood by some of the Fathers, and that their misconstruction gave rise to an affectation of voluntary poverty; so that they were supposed to be the only happy persons, who renounced all earthly things, and devoted themselves entirely to Christ. But I

trust that the explication which I have given will be satisfactory to all good and peaceable persons, so as to leave them in no doubt of the true meaning of Christ.

XIV. Nothing however was further from the intention of the Fathers, than to establish such a perfection as has since been fabricated by these hooded sophisters, which goes to set up two kinds of Christianity. For no one had then given birth to that sacrilegious dogma, which compares the monastic profession to baptism, and even openly asserts it to be a species of second baptism. Who can doubt that the Fathers would have sincerely abhorred such blasphemy? As to the concluding observation of Augustine respecting the ancient monks, that they devoted themselves wholly to charity, what need is there for a word to be said, to demonstrate it to be altogether inapplicable to this modern profession? The fact itself declares, that all who retire into monasteries separate themselves from the Church. For do they not separate themselves from the legitimate society of the faithful, by taking to themselves a peculiar ministry and a private administration of the sacraments? What is a disruption of the communion of the Church, if this be not? And, to pursue the comparison which I have commenced, and to conclude it at once, what resemblance have they in this respect to the monks of ancient times? Though they lived in a state of seclusion from other men, they had no separate Church; they received the sacraments with others; they attended the solemn assemblies to hear preaching, and to unite in prayers with the company of the faithful; and there they formed a part of the people. In erecting a private altar for themselves, what have the present monks done, but broken the bond of unity? For they have excommunicated themselves from the general body of the Church, and have shewn contempt of the ordinary ministry, by which it has pleased God that peace and charity should be preserved among his servants. All the present monasteries, therefore, I maintain to be so many conventicles of schismatics; who disturb the order of the Church, and have been cut off from the legitimate society of the faithful. And to place this division beyond all doubt, they have assumed various names of sects; and have not been ashamed to glory in that which Paul execrates beyond all possibility of ex-

aggregation. Unless we suppose that Christ was divided by the Corinthians, when every one boasted of his particular teacher; (q) and that it is now no derogation from the honour of Christ, when instead of the name of Christians, some are called Benedictines, others Franciscans, others Dominicans; and when they haughtily assume these titles to themselves as the badges of their religious profession, from an affectation of being distinguished from the general body of Christians.

XV. The differences which I have stated, between the ancient monks and those of the present age, relate not to manners, but to the profession itself. Let it therefore be remembered by the readers, that I have spoken of monachism rather than of monks, and have censured those faults which are not merely chargeable on the lives of a few, but which are inseparable from the life itself. The great dissimilarity of their manners can hardly require a particular representation. It is obvious, that there is no order of men more polluted with all the turpitude of vice; none more disgraced by factions, animosities, cabals, and intrigues. In some few convents indeed they live in chastity; if chastity it must be called, where concupiscence is so far restrained as not to be publicly infamous: but it is scarcely possible to find one convent in ten, which is not rather a brothel than a sanctuary of chastity. What frugality is there in their food? They are exactly like so many swine fattening in a sty. But lest they should complain that I handle them too roughly, I proceed no further: though in the few particulars upon which I have touched, whoever knows the matter of fact will acknowledge that I have confined myself to the simple truth. Augustine, at a time when, according to his own testimony, monks were so eminent for the strictest chastity, yet complains that there were many vagabonds among them, who by wicked arts and impostures extorted money from the unwary, who exercised a scandalous traffic by carrying about the relics of martyrs, and even sold the bones of any dead men as the bones of martyrs, and who brought disgrace on the order by a great number of similar crimes. As he declares that he had seen no better men than those who had been improved in mo-

(q) 1 Cor. i. 12, 13. iii. 4.



nasteries; so he complains that he had seen no worse men, than those who had been corrupted in monasteries. What would he say at the present day, to see almost all monasteries, not only filled, but overflowing with so many and such desperate vices? I say nothing but what is notorious to every person; though this censure is not applicable to all without any exception. For as the rule and discipline of holy living has never been so well established in monasteries, but that there were always some drones very different from the rest: so I do not say that the monks of the present day have so far degenerated from that holy antiquity, that there are not still some good men among their body; but they are very few, dispersed, and concealed among a vast multitude of the wicked and abandoned: and they are not only held in contempt, but insulted and molested, and sometimes even treated with cruelty by the rest; who according to a proverb of the Milesians, think that no good man ought to be suffered to remain among them.

XVI. By this comparison of ancient and modern monachism, I trust I have succeeded in my design of evincing the fallacy of the plea, which the present men of the hood allege in defence of their profession, from the example of the primitive Church: as they differ from the early monks just as apes do from men. At the same time I admit that even in the ancient system which Augustine commends, there is something which I cannot altogether approve. I grant, they discovered no superstition in the external exercises of a too rigid discipline: but I maintain that they were not free from excessive affectation and misguided zeal. It seemed a good thing to forsake their property, in order to exempt themselves from all earthly solicitude; but God sets a higher value on pious exertions for the government of a family, when a holy father of a family, free from all avarice, ambition, and other corrupt passions, devotes himself to this object, that he may serve God in a particular calling. It is a beautiful thing to live the life of a philosopher in retirement, at a distance from the society of men: but it is not the part of Christian charity, for a man to act as if he hated all mankind, withdrawing to the solitude of a desert, and abandoning the principal duties which the Lord hath commanded. Though we should grant that there

was no other evil in this profession, yet certainly this was not a small one, that it introduced a useless and pernicious example into the Church.

XVII. Let us now examine the nature of the vows by which monks in the present day are initiated into this celebrated order. In the first place, their design is to institute a new service, in order to conciliate the favour of God ; therefore I conclude, from the principles already established, that whatever they vow is an abomination in the sight of God. Secondly, without any regard to the calling of God, and without any approbation from him, they invent for themselves a new mode of life, in conformity with their own inclinations ; therefore I maintain it to be a rash and unlawful attempt, because their consciences have nothing to rest upon before God, and “ whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.” (r) Thirdly, they bind themselves to many corrupt and impious services, comprehended in the monachism of the present day ; therefore I contend, that they are not consecrated to God, but to the devil. For why was it lawful for the prophets to say of the Israelites, that “ they sacrificed unto devils, not to God,” (s) only because they had corrupted the true worship of God with profane ceremonies ; and why shall it not be lawful for us to say the same of the monks, whose assumption of the hood is accompanied with the yoke of a thousand impious superstitions ? Now what is the nature of their vows ? They promise to God to maintain perpetual virginity, as if they had previously stipulated with him that he should exempt them from the necessity of marriage. They have no room to plead, that they make this vow merely in a reliance on the grace of God : for as he declares that it is not given to all men, (t) we have no right to entertain a confidence that we shall receive the special gift. Let those who possess it, use it : if they experience disquietude from the stimulations of passion, let them have recourse to that aid by which alone they can be strengthened to resist. If they are unsuccessful, let them not despise the remedy which is offered to them. For those who are denied the gift of continence, are undoubtedly called to marriage by the voice of God. By continence I mean, not a mere abstinence of the

(r) Rom. xiv. 23.

(s) Deut. xxxii. 17.

(t) Matt. xix. 11.

body from fornication, but an unpolluted chastity of mind. For Paul enjoins the avoidance not only of external impurity, but also of the internal burning of libidinous desire. (*v*) It has been a custom, they say, from time immemorial, for persons who intended to devote themselves entirely to the Lord, to bind themselves by a vow of continence. I confess that this custom was practised in the early ages; but I cannot admit those ages to have been so free from every fault, that whatever was done then must be received as a rule. And it was only by degrees that in process of time things were carried to such an extreme of rigour that no one, after having made the vow, was permitted to recal it. This is evident from Cyprian. "If virgins have faithfully dedicated themselves to God, let them persevere in modesty and chastity without any disguise. Thus being firm and constant, they may expect the reward of virginity. But if they will not, or cannot persevere, it is better for them to be married, than with their pleasure to fall into the fire." With what reproaches would they now hesitate to stigmatise a person who would wish to introduce such a reasonable limitation of the vow of continence? They have widely departed therefore from the ancient custom, in refusing to admit the least moderation or relaxation, if any one be found incapable of performing the vow; and not only so, but they are not ashamed to pronounce that he commits a greater sin, if he remedies his intemperance by taking a wife, than if he contaminates his body and soul with fornication.

XVIII. But they still pursue the argument, and endeavour to shew that vows of this kind were in use in the times of the apostles; because Paul says that widows who, after having been received into the public service of the Church, married, had "cast off their first faith." (*w*) I do not deny that widows who dedicated themselves and their services to the Church, thereby entered into a tacit obligation never to marry again; not because they placed any religion in such abstinence, as began to be the case afterwards; but because they could not discharge that office without being at their own disposal, free from the restraint of

(*v*) 1 Cor. vii. 9.

(*w*) 1 Tim. v. 12.



marriage. But if after having pledged their faith they contemplated a second marriage, what was this but renouncing the calling of God? It is no wonder therefore if he says that with such desires "they wax wanton against Christ." Afterwards, by way of amplification, he subjoins, that they failed of performing what they had promised to the Church, so that they even violated and annulled their first faith pledged in baptism; which includes an engagement from every one to fulfil the duties of his calling. Unless it be thought better to understand the meaning to be, that having as it were lost all shame, they would thenceforward have no longer any regard for virtue, but would abandon themselves to every kind of profligacy, and in a licentious and dissolute life exhibit the greatest contrariety to the character of christian women: an interpretation which I much approve. We reply therefore, that those widows, who were then received into the service of the Church, imposed on themselves the condition of perpetual widowhood; if they afterwards married, we easily understand their situation to have been as Paul states, that, casting off shame, they betrayed an insolence unbecoming christian women; and that thus they not only sinned in breaking their faith pledged to the Church, but in departing from the common obligations of pious females. But first, I deny that they engaged to remain in a state of widowhood for any other reason than because marriage would be altogether incompatible with the office which they undertook; or that they bound themselves to widowhood at all, except as far as the necessity of their vocation should require. Secondly, I do not admit that their profession was so binding, but that even then it was better for them to marry than to be inflamed with concupiscence, or to be guilty of any impurity of conduct. Thirdly, I observe that Paul prescribes that age which is generally beyond all danger, forbidding any to be received under threescore years old; and especially when he directs that the choice shall be limited to those who have been content with one marriage, and have thus already given proof of their continence. And we condemn the vow of celibacy for no other reason, but because it is unjustly considered as a service acceptable to God, and is rashly made by those who have not the power to keep it.

XIX. But how was it possible to apply this passage of Paul to nuns? For widows were appointed deaconesses, not to charm God by songs or unintelligible murmurs, and to spend the rest of their time in idleness; but to serve the poor on behalf of the whole Church, and to employ themselves with all attention, earnestness, and diligence, in the duties of charity. They made a vow of widowhood, not with a view of performing any service to God in abstaining from marriage, but merely that they might be more at liberty for the discharge of their office. Lastly, they made this vow, not in their youth, nor in the flower of their age, to learn afterwards, by late experience, over what a precipice they had thrown themselves; but, when they appeared to have passed all danger, they made a vow equally consistent with safety and with piety. But, not to urge the two former considerations, it is sufficient to observe, that it was not allowable for women to be admitted to make vows of continence before the age of sixty years; since the apostle says, "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old." "I will that the younger women marry and bear children." (x) The subsequent admission of this vow at the age of forty-eight years, then forty years, and then thirty, can by no means be excused; and it is still more intolerable that unhappy girls, before they are old enough to be capable of knowing or having any experience of themselves, should be inveigled by fraud and compelled by threats to entangle themselves in those execrable snares. I shall not stay to oppose the other two vows made by monks and nuns, of poverty and obedience. I will only observe, that beside the many superstitions with which, under existing circumstances, they are interwoven, they appear to be framed for the purpose of mocking both God and men. But that we may not seem too severe in agitating every particular point, we shall content ourselves with the general repetition already given.

XX. The nature of those vows which are legitimate and acceptable to God, I think, has been sufficiently declared. Yet as timid and inexperienced consciences, even after they are dissatisfied with a vow, and convinced of its impropriety, nevertheless feel doubts respecting the obligation, and are grievously

(x) 1 Tim. v. 9, 14.

distressed, on the one hand, from a dread of violating their promise to God, and on the other, from a fear of incurring greater guilt by observing it, it is necessary here to offer them some assistance to enable them to extricate themselves from this difficulty. Now, to remove every scruple at once, I remark, that all vows, not legitimate or rightly made, as they are of no value with God, so they ought to have no force with us. For if in human contracts no promises are obligatory upon us, but those to which the party with whom we contract wishes to bind us; it is absurd to consider ourselves constrained to the performance of those things which God never requires of us: especially as our works cannot be good unless they please God, and are accompanied with the testimony of our conscience that he accepts them. For this remains a fixed principle, that “Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin:” (*y*) by which Paul intends, that whatever work is undertaken with doubts, is consequently sinful, because all good works spring from faith, by which we are assured of their acceptance with God. Therefore, if it be not lawful for a christian man to attempt any thing without this assurance, and if any one through ignorance has made a rash vow, and afterwards discovered his error, why should he not desist from the performance of it? since vows inconsiderately made, not only are not binding, but ought of necessity to be cancelled: and also, as they are not only of no value in the sight of God, but are an abomination to him, as we have already demonstrated. It is useless to argue any longer on a subject which does not require it. This one argument appears to me sufficient to tranquillize pious consciences, and to liberate them from every scruple—That all works not proceeding from a pure source, and directed to a legitimate end, are rejected by God, and rejected in such a manner that he forbids our continuance, as much as our commencement of them. Hence we may conclude, that vows which have originated in error and superstition, are of no value with God, and ought to be relinquished by us.

XXI. This solution will furnish an answer to the calumnies of the wicked, in defence of those who leave monachism for some honourable way of life. They are heavily accused of breach of

(*y*) Rom. xiv. 23.



faith and perjury, having broken, as it is commonly supposed, the indissoluble bond which held them to God and the Church. But I maintain that there is no bond, where that which man confirms is abrogated by God. Besides, though we should grant that they were bound while they were involved in error and ignorance of God; now, since they have been enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, I maintain that the grace of Christ has delivered them from the obligation. For if the cross of Christ possesses such efficacy as to deliver us from the curse, under which we were held by the law of God, how much more then shall it extricate us from other bonds, which are nothing but delusive snares of Satan? Whomsoever, therefore, Christ illuminates with the light of his gospel, there is no doubt that he liberates them from all the snares in which they had entangled themselves by superstition. Though they are not at a loss for another defence, if they are not qualified to live in celibacy. For if an impossible vow be the ruin of souls, which it is the will of the Lord to save and not to destroy; it follows that it is not right to persevere in it. But the impossibility of an observance of the vow of continence by those who are not endued with a special gift, we have already shewn, and without my saying a word, experience itself declares; for it is notorious what extreme impurity prevails in almost all monasteries, and if any of them appear more virtuous and modest than the rest, it does not follow that they are really more chaste, because they conceal the vice of unchastity. Thus God inflicts awful punishments on the audacity of men, when, forgetting their weakness, they covet, in opposition to nature, that which is denied them, and, despising the remedies which God had put into their hands, indulge a contumacious and obstinate presumption that they are able to overcome the vice of incontinence. For what shall we call it but contumacy, when any one who is admonished that he stands in need of marriage, and that it has been given to him by the Lord as a remedy, not only contemns it, but binds himself by an oath to persevere in that contempt?

## CHAPTER XIV.

*The Sacraments.*

**C**ONNECTED with the preaching of the gospel, another assistance and support for our faith is presented to us in the sacraments : on the subject of which it is highly important to lay down some certain doctrine, that we may learn for what end they were instituted, and how they ought to be used. In the first place, it is necessary to consider what a sacrament is. Now I think it will be a simple and appropriate definition, if we say that it is an outward sign, by which the Lord seals in our consciences the promises of his good-will towards us, to support the weakness of our faith, and we on our part testify our piety towards him, in his presence and that of angels, as well as before men. It may however be more briefly defined, in other words, by calling it a testimony of the grace of God towards us, confirmed by an outward sign, with a reciprocal attestation of our piety towards him. Whichever of these definitions be chosen, it conveys exactly the same meaning as that of Augustine, which states a sacrament to be “ a visible sign of a sacred thing,” or “ a visible form of invisible grace :” but it expresses the thing itself with more clearness and precision ; for as his conciseness leaves some obscurity, by which many inexperienced persons may be misled, I have endeavoured to render the subject plainer by more words, that no room might be left for any doubt.

II. The reason why the ancient Fathers used this word in such a sense, is very evident. For whenever the author of the old common version of the New Testament wanted to render the Greek word *μυστηριον*, *mystery*, into Latin, especially where it related to divine things, he used the word *sacramentum*, “ sacrament.” Thus in the Epistle to the Ephesians, “ Having made known unto us the *mystery* of his will.” (a) Again, “ If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward : how that by revelation

(a) Eph. i. 9.

he made known unto me the *mystery*." (b) In the Epistle to the Colossians: "The *mystery* which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this *mystery*." (c) Again, to Timothy: "Great is the *mystery* of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." (d) In all these places, where the word *mystery* is used, the author of that version has rendered it *sacrament*. He would not say *arcanum*, or *secret*, lest he should appear to degrade the majesty of the subject. Therefore he has used the word *sacrament* for a sacred or divine secret. In this signification it frequently occurs in the writings of the Fathers. And it is well known, that baptism and the Lord's supper, which the Latins denominate *sacraments*, are called *mysteries* by the Greeks; a synonymous use of the terms, which removes every doubt. And hence the word *sacrament* came to be applied to those signs which contained a representation of sublime and spiritual things: which is also remarked by Augustine, who says, "It would be tedious to dispute respecting the diversity of signs, which, when they pertain to divine things, are called *sacraments*."

III. Now, from the definition which we have established, we see that there is never any sacrament without an antecedent promise of God, to which it is subjoined as an appendix, in order to confirm and seal the promise itself, and to certify and ratify it to us: which means God foresees to be necessary, in the first place on account of our ignorance and dulness, and in the next place on account of our weakness; and yet, strictly speaking, not so much for the confirmation of his sacred word, as for our establishment in the faith of it. For the truth of God is sufficiently solid and certain in itself, and can receive no better confirmation from any other quarter than from itself: but our faith being slender and weak, unless it be supported on every side, and sustained by every assistance, immediately shakes, fluctuates, totters, and falls. And as we are corporeal, always creeping on the ground, cleaving to terrestrial and carnal objects, and incapable of understanding or conceiving

(b) Eph. iii. 2, 3.

(c) Col. i. 26, 27.

(d) 1 Tim. iii. 16.



of any thing of a spiritual nature, our merciful Lord, in his infinite indulgence, accommodates himself to our capacity, condescending to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements, and in the flesh itself to present to us a mirror of spiritual blessings. "For if we were incorporeal," as Chrysostom says, "he would have given us these things pure and incorporeal. Now because we have souls enclosed in bodies, he gives us spiritual things under visible emblems. Not because there are such qualities in the nature of the things presented to us in the sacraments; but because they have been designated by God to this signification."

IV. This is what is commonly said, that a sacrament consists of the word and the outward sign. For we ought to understand the *word*, not of a murmur uttered without any meaning or faith, a mere whisper like a magical incantation, supposed to possess the power of consecrating the elements, but of the gospel preached, which instructs us in the signification of the visible sign. That which is commonly practised under the tyranny of the Pope, therefore, involves a gross profanation of the mysteries: for they have thought it sufficient for the priest to mutter over the form of consecration, while the people are gazing in ignorance. Indeed, they have taken effectual care that it should be all unintelligible to the people; for they have pronounced the consecration in Latin before illiterate men: and have at length carried superstition to such a pitch as to consider it not rightly performed, unless it be done in a hoarse murmur which few could hear. But Augustine speaks in a very different manner of the sacramental word. "Let the word," says he, "be added to the element, and it will become a sacrament." For whence does the water derive such great virtue, as at once to touch the body and purify the heart, except from the word? not because it is spoken, but because it is believed. For in the word itself the transient sound is one thing, the permanent virtue is another. "This is the word of faith which we preach," (e) says the Apostle. Whence it is said of the Gentiles, in the Acts of the Apostles, that "God purifies their hearts by faith," (f) And the

(e) Rom. x. 8.

(f) Acts xv. 9.

Apostle Peter says, "Baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.)" (*g*) "This is the word of faith which we preach," by which baptism is consecrated to endue it with a purifying virtue. We see how he makes the preaching of the word necessary to the production of faith. And we need not labour much to prove this, because it is very plain what Christ did, what he commanded us to do, what the apostles followed, and what the purer Church observed. Even from the beginning of the world, whenever God gave the holy Fathers any sign, it is well known to have been inseparably connected with some doctrine, without which our senses would only be astonished with the mere prospect of it. Therefore, when we hear mention made of the sacramental word, let us understand it of the promise, which, being audibly and intelligibly preached by the minister, instructs the people in the meaning and tendency of the sign.

V. Nor ought any attention to be paid to some, who endeavour to oppose this by a dilemma which discovers more subtilty than solidity. They say, Either we know that the word of God which precedes the sacrament is the true will of God, or we do not know it. If we know it, then we learn nothing new from the sacrament which follows. If we do not know it, neither shall we learn it from the sacrament, the virtue of which lies entirely in the word. Let it be concisely replied, that the seals appended to charters, patents, and other public instruments, are nothing, taken by themselves, because they would be appended to no purpose, if the parchment had nothing written upon it; and yet they nevertheless confirm and authenticate what is written on the instruments to which they are annexed. Nor can it be objected that this similitude has been recently invented by us; for it has been used by Paul himself, who calls circumcision a *seal*, (*h*) *σφραγίδα*, in a passage where he is professedly contending that circumcision did not constitute the righteousness of Abraham, but was a seal of that covenant, in the faith of which he had already been justified. And what is there that ought to give any man much offence, if

(*g*) 1 Peter iii. 21.(*h*) Rom. iv. 11.

we teach that the promise is sealed by the sacraments, while it is evident that among the promises themselves one is confirmed by another? For in proportion to its superior clearness, it is the better calculated for the support of faith. Now the sacraments bring us the clearest promises, and have this peculiarity beyond the word, that they give us a lively representation of them, as in a picture. Nor ought we to regard the objection, frequently urged, from the distinction between sacraments and seals of civil instruments; that while they both consist of the carnal elements of this world, the former cannot be fit to seal the promises of God, which are spiritual and eternal, as the latter are accustomed to be appended to seal the edicts of princes relative to frail and transitory things. For a faithful man, when the sacraments are placed before his eyes, does not confine himself to that carnal spectacle; but by those steps of analogy which I have indicated, rises in pious contemplation to the sublime mysteries which are concealed under the sacramental symbols.

VI. And since the Lord calls his promises *covenants*, and the sacraments *seals of covenants*, we may draw a similitude from the covenants of men. The ancients, in confirmation of their engagements, were accustomed to kill a sow. But what would have been the slaughter of a sow, if it had not been accompanied, and even preceded, by some words? For sows were often slaughtered without any latent or sublime mystery. What is the contact of one man's right hand with that of another, since hands are not unfrequently joined in hostility? But when words of friendship and compact have preceded, the obligations of covenants are confirmed by such signs, notwithstanding they have been previously conceived, proposed, and determined in words. Sacraments therefore are exercises, which increase and strengthen our faith in the word of God; and because we are corporeal, they are exhibited under corporeal symbols, to instruct us according to our dull capacities, and to lead us by the hand as so many young children. For this reason Augustine calls a sacrament "a visible word;" because it represents the promises of God portrayed as in a picture, and places before our eyes an image of them, in which every lineament is strikingly expressed. Other simili-



tudes may also be adduced for the better elucidation of the nature of sacraments; as if we call them *pillars of our faith*: for as an edifice rests on its foundation, and yet from the addition of pillars placed under it receives an increase of stability; so faith rests on the word of God as its foundation, but when the sacraments are added to it as pillars, they bring with them an accession of strength. Or if we call them *mirrors*, in which we may contemplate the riches of grace which God imparts to us: for in the sacraments, as we have already observed, he manifests himself to us as far as our dulness is capable of knowing him, and testifies his benevolence and love towards us more expressly than he does by his word.

VII. Nor is there any force in their reasoning, when they contend that the sacraments are not testimonies of the grace of God, because they are often administered to the wicked, who yet do not, in consequence of this, experience God to be more propitious to them, but rather procure to themselves more grievous condemnation. For by the same argument, neither would the gospel be a testimony of the grace of God, because it is heard by many who despise it, nor even Christ himself, who was seen and known by multitudes, of whom very few received him. A similar observation may be applied to royal edicts; for great numbers of people despise and deride that seal of authentication, notwithstanding they know that it proceeded from the monarch to confirm his will; some utterly disregard it, as a thing not relating to them; others even hold it in execration; so that a survey of the correspondence of the two cases ought to produce greater approbation of the similitudes which I have before used. Therefore it is certain that the Lord offers us his mercy, and a pledge of his grace, both in his holy word and in the sacraments; but it is not apprehended, except by those who receive the word and sacraments with a certain faith: as the Father has offered and presented Christ to all for salvation, but he is not known and received by all. Augustine, intending to express this sentiment, somewhere says, that the efficacy of the word is displayed in the sacrament, "not because it is spoken, but because it is believed." Therefore Paul, when he is addressing the faithful, speaks of the sacraments so as to include in them

the communion of Christ ; as when he says, “ As many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ.” (*i*) Again, “ By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.” (*k*) But when he speaks of the improper use of the sacraments, he attributes no more to them than to vain and useless figures ; by which he signifies, that however impious persons and hypocrites, by their perversion of the sacraments, may destroy or obscure the effect of divine grace in them, yet that notwithstanding this, whenever and wherever God pleases, they afford a true testimony of the communion of Christ, and the Spirit of God himself exhibits and performs the very thing which they promise. We conclude therefore that sacraments are truly called testimonies of the grace of God, and are, as it were, seals of the benevolence he bears to us, which, by confirming it to our minds, sustain, cherish, strengthen, and increase our faith. The reasons which some are in the habit of objecting against this sentiment are exceedingly weak and frivolous. They allege, that if our faith be good, it cannot be made better ; for that there is no real faith except that which rests on the mercy of God without any wavering, instability, or distraction. It would have been better for such persons to pray, with the apostles, that the Lord would increase their faith ; (*l*) than confidently to boast of such a perfection of faith, as no one of the sons of men ever yet attained, or ever will attain, in this life. Let them answer what kind of faith they suppose him to have possessed, who said, “ Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.” (*m*) For even that, though yet only in its commencement, was a good faith, and capable of being improved by the removal of unbelief. But there is no argument which more fully refutes them than their own conscience : for if they confess themselves sinners, which, whatever they may wish, they cannot deny, they must be obliged to impute it to the imperfection of their faith.

VIII. But they say, Philip answered the Eunuch, that he might be baptised “ if ” he “ believed with all ” his “ heart.” (*n*) And what room, they ask, is there here for the confirmation of baptism, where faith fills the whole heart ? On the other hand, I ask

(*i*) Gal. iii. 27.(*k*) 1 Cor. xii. 13.(*l*) Luke xvii. 5.(*m*) Mark ix. 24.(*n*) Acts viii. 37.

them, whether they do not feel a large part of their heart destitute of faith, and whether they do not daily know some fresh increase of it. A heathen gloried that he grew old in learning. We Christians are miserable indeed if we grow old in making no improvement, whose faith ought to be advancing from one stage to another till its attainment of perfect manhood. "To believe with all the heart," therefore, in this passage, is not to believe Christ in a perfect manner, but only signifies embracing him with sincerity of soul and firmness of mind; not to be filled with him, but to hunger, thirst, and sigh after him with ardent affection. It is the custom of the Scriptures to say that any thing is done with the whole heart, which is done with sincerity of mind: as in these and other passages: "With my whole heart have I sought thee." (o) "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart." (o) On the contrary, when it rebukes the fraudulent and deceitful, it reproaches them with "a double heart." (p) Our adversaries further allege, that if faith be increased by the sacraments, the Holy Spirit must have been given in vain, whose work and influence it is to commence, to confirm, and to consummate faith. I confess that faith is the peculiar and entire work of the Holy Spirit, by whose illumination we know God and the treasures of his goodness, and without whose light our mind is too blind to be capable of any sight, and too stupid to be capable of the least relish of spiritual things. But instead of one favour of God, which they mention, we acknowledge three. For first, the Lord teaches and instructs us by his word: secondly, he confirms us by his sacraments: lastly, he illuminates our minds by the light of his Holy Spirit, and opens an entrance into our hearts for the word and sacraments; which otherwise would only strike the ears and present themselves to the eyes, without producing the least effect upon the mind.

IX. With respect to the confirmation and increase of faith, therefore, I wish the reader to be apprized, and I conceive I have already expressed, in language too plain to be misunderstood, that I assign this office to the sacraments; not from an opinion of their possessing a perpetual inherent virtue, effica-

(o) Psalm cxix. 10; cxi. 1; cxxxviii. 1.

(p) Psalm xii. 2.



cious of itself to the advancement or confirmation of faith; but because they have been instituted by the Lord for the express purpose of promoting its establishment and augmentation. But they only perform their office aright when they are accompanied by the Spirit, that internal Teacher, by whose energy alone our hearts are penetrated, our affections are moved, and an entrance is opened for the sacraments into our souls. If he be absent, the sacraments can produce no more effect upon our minds than the splendour of the sun on blind eyes, or the sound of a voice on deaf ears. I make such a distinction and distribution, therefore, between the Spirit and the sacraments, that I consider all the energy of operation as belonging to the Spirit, and the sacraments as mere instruments, which without his agency are vain and useless, but which, when he acts and exerts his power in the heart, are fraught with surprising efficacy. Now it is evident how, according to this opinion, the faith of a pious mind is confirmed by the sacraments; namely, as the eyes see by the light of the sun, and the ears hear by the sound of a voice: the light would have no effect upon the eyes, unless they had a natural faculty capable of being enlightened; and it would be in vain for the ears to be assisted with any sound, if they had not been naturally formed for hearing. But if it be true, as we ought at once to conclude, that what the visive faculty does in our eyes towards our beholding the light, and the faculty of hearing does in our ears towards our perception of sound, such is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts for the formation, support, preservation, and establishment of our faith: then these two consequences immediately follow; that the sacraments are attended with no benefit without the influence of the Holy Spirit; and that in hearts already instructed by that Teacher they still subserve the confirmation and increase of faith. There is only this difference, that our eyes and ears are naturally endued with the faculties of seeing and hearing, but the Holy Spirit accomplishes this in our hearts by special and preternatural grace.

X. This reasoning will also serve for a solution of the objections with which some persons are greatly disturbed; that if we attribute to creatures either the increase or confirmation

of faith, we derogate from the Spirit of God, whom we ought to acknowledge as its sole Author. For we do not at the same time deny him the praise of its confirmation and increase; but we assert that the way in which he increases and confirms our faith is by preparing our minds by his inward illumination to receive that confirmation which is proposed in the sacraments. If the way in which this has been expressed be too obscure, it shall be elucidated by the following similitude. If you intend to persuade a person to do a certain act, you will consider all the reasons calculated to draw him over to your opinion, and to constrain him to submit to your advice. But you will make no impression upon him, unless he possess a perspicuous and acute judgment to be able to determine what force there is in your reasons; unless his mind also be docile, and prepared to listen to instruction; and lastly, unless he have conceived such an opinion of your fidelity and prudence as may prepossess him in favour of your sentiments. For there are many obstinate spirits, never to be moved by any reasons; and where a person's fidelity is suspected, and his authority despised, little effect will be produced, even with those who are disposed to learn. On the contrary, let all these things be present, and they will ensure the acquiescence of the person advised, in those counsels which he would otherwise have derided. This work also the Spirit effects within us. Lest the word should assail our ears in vain, lest the sacraments should in vain strike our eyes, he shews us that it is God who addresses us in them, he softens the hardness of our hearts, and forms them to that obedience which is due to the word of the Lord: in fine, he conveys those external words and sacraments from the ears into the soul. Our faith is confirmed, therefore, both by the word and by the sacraments, when they place before our eyes the good-will of our heavenly Father towards us, in the knowledge of which all the firmness of our faith consists, and by which its strength is augmented: the Spirit confirms it, when he makes this confirmation effectual by engraving it on our minds. In the mean time, the Father of lights cannot be prohibited from illuminating our minds by means of the lustre of the sacraments, as he enlightens our bodily eyes with the rays of the sun.

XI. That there is this property in the external word, our Lord has shewn in a parable, by calling it "seed." (*q*) For as seed, if it fall on a desert and neglected spot of ground, will die without producing any crop; but if it be cast upon a well manured and cultivated field, it brings forth its fruit with an abundant increase: so the word of God, if it fall upon some stiff neck, it will be as unproductive as seed dropped upon the sea-shore; but if it light upon a soul cultivated by the agency of the heavenly Spirit, it will be abundantly fruitful. Now if the word be justly compared to seed; as we say that from seed corn grows, increases, and comes to maturity, why may we not say that faith derives its commencement, increase, and perfection, from the word of God? Paul, in different places, excellently expresses both these things. For, with a view to recal to the recollection of the Corinthians with what efficacy God had attended his labours, he glories in having the ministry of the Spirit, as if there were an indissoluble connection between his preaching and the power of the Holy Spirit operating to the illumination of their minds, and the excitement of their hearts. (*r*) But in another place, with a view to apprise them how far the power of the word of God extends, merely as preached by man, he compares ministers to husbandmen; who, when they have employed their labour and industry in cultivating the ground, have nothing more that they can do. But what would ploughing, and sowing, and watering, avail, unless heavenly goodness caused the seed to vegetate? Therefore he concludes, "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (*s*) The apostles, then, in their preaching, exerted the power of the Spirit, as far as God made use of the instruments appointed by himself for the exhibition of his spiritual grace. But we must always keep in view this distinction, that we may remember how far the power of man extends, and what is exclusively the work of God.

XII. Now it is so true that the sacraments are confirmations of our faith, that sometimes, when the Lord intends to take away the confidence of those things which had been promised

(*q*) Matt. xiii. 3--23; Luke viii. 5--15.

(*r*) 1 Cor. ii. 4. 2 Cor. iii. 6, 8.

(*s*) 1 Cor. iii. 7.



in the sacraments, he removes the sacraments themselves. When he deprived Adam of the gift of immortality, he expelled him from the garden of Eden, saying, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever." (*t*) What can be the meaning of this language? Could the fruit restore to Adam the incorruption from which he had now fallen? Certainly not. But it was the same as if the Lord had said, Lest he should cherish a vain confidence, if he retain the symbol of my promise, let him be deprived of that which might give him some hope of immortality. For the same reason, when the apostle exhorts the Ephesians to "remember that" they "were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," he states that they were not partakers of circumcision: (*v*) thereby signifying that not having received the sign of the promise, they were excluded from the promise itself. To the other objection which they make, that the glory of God is transferred to creatures to whom so much power is attributed, and thereby sustains a proportionate diminution, it is easy to answer; that we place no power in creatures; we only maintain that God uses such means and instruments as he sees will be suitable, in order that all things may be subservient to his glory, as he is the Lord and ruler of all. Therefore as by bread and other aliments he feeds our body, as by the sun he enlightens the world, as by fire he produces warmth; yet bread, the sun, and fire, are nothing but instruments by which he dispenses his blessings to us: so he nourishes our faith in a spiritual manner by the sacraments, which are instituted for the purpose of placing his promises before our eyes for our contemplation, and of serving us as pledges of them. And as we ought not to place any confidence in the other creatures which, by the liberality and beneficence of God, have been destined to our uses, and by whose instrumentality he communicates to us the bounties of his goodness, nor to admire and celebrate them as the causes of our enjoyments; so neither ought our confidence to rest in the sacra-

(*t*) Gen. iii. 22.(*v*) Eph. ii. 11, 12.

ments, or the glory of God to be transferred to them; but forsaking all other things, both our faith and confession ought to rise to him, the author of the sacraments and of every other blessing.

XIII. The argument which some persons adduce from the very name of *sacrament* is destitute of any force. Though the word *sacrament* has various significations in authors of the first authority, yet it has but one which has any agreement or connection with *signs* or *standards* (*signa*): that is, when it denotes the solemn oath taken by a soldier to his commander when he enters on a military life. For as by the military oath new soldiers bind themselves to their commander, and assume the military profession: so by our signs we profess Christ to be our leader, and declare that we fight under his banners. They add similitudes for the further elucidation of their opinion. As the dress of the Romans, who wore gowns, distinguished them from the Greeks, who wore cloaks; as the different orders among the Romans were distinguished from each other by their respective badges, the senatorial order from the equestrian by purple habits and round shoes, and the equestrian from the plebeian by a ring: as French and English ships of war are known by flags of different colours, the French flags being white, and the English red: so we have our signs or badges to distinguish us from unbelievers. But from the observations already made, it is evident that the ancient Fathers who gave our signs the name of sacraments, were not at all guided by the previous use of this word in Latin writers; but that they gave it a new sense for their own convenience, simply denoting sacred signs. And if we wish to carry our researches any further, it may be found that they transferred this name to the signification now given, on the same principle of analogy which induced them to transfer the word *faith* to the sense in which it is now used. For as faith properly signifies truth in the fulfilment of promises, yet they have applied it to the assurance or certain persuasion which a person has of the truth itself: so as a sacrament is an oath by which a soldier binds himself to his leader, they have applied it to the sign by which the leader receives soldiers into his army. For by the sacraments the Lord promises that he will be our God, and that

we shall be his people. But we pass over such subtilties, as I think I have proved by sufficient arguments that the ancients had no other view, in their application of the word *sacrament*, than to signify that the ceremonies to which they applied it were signs of holy and spiritual things. We admit the comparison deduced from external badges, but we cannot bear that the last and least use of the sacraments should be represented as their principal and even sole object. The first object of them is to assist our faith towards God; the second, to testify our confession before men. The similitudes which have been mentioned are applicable to this secondary design, but the primary one ought never to be forgotten; for otherwise, as we have seen, these mysteries would cease to interest us, unless they were aids of our faith, and appendices of doctrine, destined to the same use and end.

XIV. On the other hand, we require to be apprised, that as these persons weaken the force of the sacraments, and entirely subvert their use; so there are others of a contrary party, who attribute to the sacraments I know not what latent virtues, which are nowhere represented as communicated to them by the word of God. By this error the simple and inexperienced are dangerously deceived, being taught to seek the gifts of God where they can never be found, and being gradually drawn away from God to embrace mere vanity instead of his truth. For the sophistical schools have maintained, with one consent, that the sacraments of the new law, or those now used in the Christian Church, justify and confer grace, provided we do not obstruct their operation by any mortal sin. It is impossible to express the pestilence and fatal nature of this opinion, and especially as it has prevailed over a large part of the world, to the great detriment of the Church, for many ages past. Indeed, it is evidently diabolical: for by promising justification without faith, it precipitates souls into destruction; in the next place, by representing the sacraments as the cause of justification, it envelopes the minds of men, naturally too much inclined to the earth, in gross superstition, leading them to rest in the exhibition of a corporeal object rather than in God himself. Of these two evils I wish we had not had such ample experience, as to supersede the necessity of much proof.



What is a sacrament, taken without faith, but the most certain ruin of the Church? For as nothing is to be expected from it, but in consequence of the promise, which denotes God's wrath against unbelievers as much as it offers his grace to the faithful; the person who supposes that the sacraments confer any more upon him than that which is offered by the word of God, and which he receives by a true faith, is greatly deceived. Hence also it may be concluded, that confidence of salvation does not depend on the participation of the sacraments, as though that constituted our justification, which we know to be placed in Christ alone, and to be communicated to us no less by the preaching of the gospel than by the sealing of the sacraments, and that it may be completely enjoyed without this participation. So true is the observation, which has also been made by Augustine, that invisible sanctification may exist without the visible sign, and, on the contrary, that the visible sign may be used without real sanctification. For, as he also writes in another place, "men put on Christ, sometimes by the reception of a sacrament, sometimes by sanctification of life." The first case may be common to the good and the bad, the second is peculiar to the faithful.

XV. Hence that distinction, if it be well understood, which is frequently stated by Augustine, between a sacrament and the matter of a sacrament. For his meaning is, not only that a sacrament contains a figure and some truth signified by that figure, but that their connection is not such as to render them inseparable from each other; and even when they are united, the thing signified ought always to be distinguished from the sign, that what belongs to the one may not be transferred to the other. He speaks of their separation, when he observes, that "the sacraments produce the effect which they represent, in the elect alone." Again, when he is speaking of the Jews; "Though the sacraments were common to all, the grace which is the power of the sacrament was not common: so now also the washing of regeneration is common to all; but the grace itself, by which the members of Christ are regenerated with their Head, is not common to all." Again, in another place, speaking of the Lord's supper; "We also in the present day receive visible meat; but the sacrament is one thing, and the power of

the sacrament is another. How is it that many receive of the altar and die, and die in consequence of receiving. For the morsel of bread given by the Lord to Judas was poison; not because Judas received an evil thing, but because being a wicked man he received a good thing in a sinful manner." A little after; "The sacrament of this thing, that is, of the unity of the body and blood of Christ, is prepared on the table of the Lord, in some places daily, in other places at appointed days, at stated intervals of time; and is thence received, by some to life, by others to destruction. But the thing signified by this sacrament is received, not to destruction, but to life, by every one who partakes of it." He had just before said; "He shall not die, who eats; I refer not to the visible sacrament, but to the power of the sacrament: who eats internally, not externally, he who eats in his heart, not he who presses with his teeth." In all these passages we find it maintained, that a sacrament is separated from the truth signified in it, by the unworthiness of a person who receives it amiss, so that there is nothing left in it but a vain and useless figure. In order to enjoy the thing signified together with the sign, and not a mere sign destitute of the truth it was intended to convey, it is necessary to apprehend by faith the word which is contained in it. Thus, in proportion to the communion we have with Christ by means of the sacraments, will be the advantage which we shall derive from them.

XVI. If this be obscure in consequence of its brevity, I will explain it more at large. I affirm that Christ is the matter, or substance, of all the sacraments; since they have all their solidity in him, and promise nothing out of him. So much more intolerable is the error of Peter Lombard, who expressly makes them causes of righteousness and salvation, of which they are parts. Leaving all causes, therefore, of human invention, we ought to adhere to this one cause. As far as we are assisted by their instrumentality, to nourish, confirm, and increase our faith in Christ, to obtain a more perfect possession of him and an enjoyment of his riches, so far they are efficacious to us: and this is the case, when we receive by true faith that which is offered in them. Do the impious then, it will be said, by their ingratitude frustrate the ordinance of God and

cause it to come to nothing? I reply, that what I have said is not to be understood as implying, that the virtue and truth of a sacrament depends on the condition or choice of him who receives it. For what God hath instituted continues unshaken, and retains its nature, however men may vary: but as it is one thing to offer, and another to receive, there is no incongruity in maintaining, that a symbol, consecrated by the word of the Lord, is in reality what it is declared to be, and preserves its virtue, and yet that it confers no benefit on a wicked and impious person. But Augustine happily solves this question in a few words: he says, "If thou receive it carnally, still it ceases not to be spiritual; but it is not so to thee." And, as in the passages already cited, this Father shews that the symbol used in a sacrament is of no value, if it be separated from the truth signified by it; so, on the other hand, he states that it is necessary to distinguish them, even where they are united, lest our attention be confined too much to the external sign. "As to follow the letter," says he, "to take the sign instead of the things signified, betrays servile weakness; so it is the part of unsteadiness and error, to interpret the signs in such a manner as to derive no advantage from them." He mentions two faults, against which it is necessary to guard. One is, when we take the signs as if they were given in vain, and disparaging or diminishing their secret significations by our perverse misconstruction, exclude ourselves from the advantage which we ought to derive from them. The other is, when not elevating our minds beyond the visible sign, we transfer to the sacraments the praise of those benefits, which are only conferred upon us by Christ alone, and that by the agency of the Holy Spirit who makes us partakers of Christ himself, and by the instrumentality of the external signs which invite us to Christ, but which cannot be perverted to any other use, without a shameful subversion of all their utility.

XVII. Wherefore let us abide by this conclusion, that the office of the sacraments is precisely the same as that of the word of God; which is to offer and present Christ to us, and in him the treasures of his heavenly grace; but they confer no advantage or profit without being received by faith: just as wine, or oil, or any other liquor, though it be poured plentifully



on a vessel, yet will it overflow and be lost, unless the mouth of the vessel be open; and the vessel itself, though wet on the outside, will remain dry and empty within. It is also necessary to guard against being drawn into an error allied to this, from reading the extravagant language used by the Fathers with a view to exalt the dignity of sacraments; lest we should suppose there is some secret power annexed and attached to the sacraments, so that they communicate the grace of the Holy Spirit, just as wine is given in the cup: whereas the only office assigned to them by God is to testify and confirm his benevolence towards us; nor do they impart any benefit, unless they are accompanied by the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts, and render us capable of receiving this testimony: and here also several distinct favours of God are eminently displayed. For the sacraments, as we have before hinted, fulfil to us on the part of God the same office as messengers of joyful intelligence, or seals for the confirmation of covenants on the part of men: they communicate no grace from themselves, but announce and shew, and, as earnest and pledges, ratify, the things which are given to us by the goodness of God. The Holy Spirit, whom the sacraments do not promiscuously impart to all, but whom God, by a peculiar privilege, confers upon his servants, is he who brings with him the graces of God, who gives the sacraments admission into our hearts, and causes them to bring forth fruit in us. Now though we do not deny that God himself accompanies his institution by the very present power of his Spirit, that the administration of the sacraments which he hath ordained may not be vain and unfruitful; yet we assert the necessity of a separate consideration and contemplation of the internal grace of the Spirit, as it is distinguished from the external ministry. Whatever God promises and adumbrates in signs, therefore, he really performs; and the signs are not without their effect, to prove the veracity and fidelity of their Author. The only question here is, whether God works by a proper and intrinsic power, as it is expressed, or resigns the office to external symbols. Now we contend, that whatever instruments he employs, this derogates nothing from his supreme operation. When this doctrine is maintained respecting the sacraments, their dignity is suffi-

ciently announced, their use plainly signified, their utility abundantly declared, and a proper moderation is preserved in all these particulars, so that nothing is attributed, which ought not to be attributed to them, and nothing that belongs to them is denied: while there is no admission of that figment, which places the cause of justification and the power of the Spirit in the sacramental elements, as in so many vehicles; and that peculiar power which has been omitted by others is clearly expressed. Here also it must be remarked, that God accomplishes within, that which the minister represents and testifies by the external act; that we may not attribute to a mortal man what God challenges exclusively to himself. Augustine has judiciously suggested the same sentiment. "How," says he "do Moses and God both sanctify? Not Moses instead of God. Moses does it with visible signs, by his ministry. God does it with invisible grace, by his Holy Spirit. Here also lies all the efficacy of visible sacraments. For what avail those visible sacraments without that sanctification of invisible grace?"

XVIII. The term *sacrament*, as we have hitherto treated of its nature, comprehends generally all the signs which God hath ever given to men, to certify and assure them of the truth of his promises. These he hath been pleased to place in natural things, and sometimes to exhibit in miracles. Examples of the former kind are such as these: when he gave Adam and Eve the tree of life, as a pledge of immortality, which they might assure themselves of enjoying as long as they should eat of the fruit of that tree: (w) and when he "set" his "bow in the cloud," as a token to Noah and his posterity, that there should "no more be a flood to destroy the earth." (x) Not that the tree would actually communicate immortality to them, which it could not give to itself; or that the rainbow, which is merely a refraction of the rays of the sun on the opposite clouds, would have any efficacy in restraining the waters; but because they had a mark impressed upon them by the word of God, constituting them signs and seals of his covenants. The tree and the rainbow both existed before, but when

(w) Gen. ii. 9, 16, 17.

(x) Gen. ix. 12—17.

they were inscribed with the word of God, they were endued with a new form, so that they began to be something that they were not before. And that no one may suppose this to be spoken in vain, the bow itself continues to be a witness, to us in the present age, of that covenant which God made with Noah : whenever we behold it, we read this promise of God in it, that he would never more destroy the earth with a flood. Therefore if any smatterer in philosophy, with a view to ridicule the simplicity of our faith, contend that such a variety of colours is the natural result of the refraction of the solar rays on an opposite cloud, we must immediately acknowledge it, but we may smile at his stupidity in not acknowledging God as the Lord and Governor of nature, who uses all the elements according to his will for the promotion of his own glory. And if he had impressed similar characters on the sun, on the stars, on the earth, and on stones, they would all have been sacraments to us. Why is not silver of as much value before it is coined, as it is after, since the metal is the very same? The reason is that it has nothing added to its natural state: stamped with a public impression, it becomes money, and receives a new valuation. And shall not God be able to mark his creatures with his word, that they may become sacraments, though before they were mere elements? Examples of the second kind were exhibited, when God shewed Abraham “a smoking furnace and a burning lamp;” (*y*) when he watered the fleece with dew while the earth remained dry, and afterwards bedewed the earth without wetting the fleece, to promise victory to Gideon; (*z*) when “he brought the shadow ten degrees backward in the dial,” (*a*) to promise recovery to Hezekiah. As these things were done to support and establish the weakness of their faith, they also were sacraments.

XIX. But our present design is to treat particularly of those sacraments which the Lord hath appointed to be ordinarily used in his church, to keep his worshippers and servants in one faith and the confession of the same. “For,” to use the language of Augustine, “men cannot be united in any profession of religion, whether true or false, unless they are

(*y*) Gen. xv. 17.(*z*) Judges vi. 37—40.(*a*) 2 Kings xx. 11.



connected by some communion of visible signs or sacraments." Our most merciful Father, therefore, foreseeing this necessity, did, from the beginning, institute for his servants certain exercises of piety, which Satan afterwards depraved and corrupted in a variety of ways, transferring them to impious and idolatrous worship. Hence those initiations of the heathens into their mysteries, and the rest of their degenerate rites, which, though fraught with error and superstition, at the same time furnish an evidence that such external signs are indispensable to a profession of religion. But as they were neither founded on the word of God, nor referred to that truth which ought to be the object of all religious emblems, they are unworthy of notice, where mention is made of the sacred symbols which have been instituted by God, and which have never been perverted from their original principle, which constitutes them aids of true piety. Now they consist not of mere signs, like the rainbow and the tree of life, but in ceremonies; or rather, the signs which are here given, are ceremonies. And, as we have before observed, as they are testimonies of grace and salvation on the part of the Lord; so on our part they are badges of our profession, by which we publicly devote ourselves to God, and swear obedience and fidelity to him. Chrysostom, therefore, somewhere calls them *compacts*, by which God covenants with us, and we bind ourselves to purity and sanctity of life; because a mutual stipulation is made in them between God and us. For as the Lord promises to obliterate and efface all the guilt and punishment that we have incurred by sin, and reconciles us to himself in his only-begotten Son; so we on our parts by this profession bind ourselves to him to serve him in piety and innocence of life: so that such sacraments may justly be described as ceremonies by which God is pleased to exercise his people, in the first place, to nourish, excite, and confirm faith in their hearts; and in the next place, to testify their religion before men.

XX. And even the sacraments have been different according to the varieties of different periods, and corresponding to the dispensation by which it has pleased the Lord to manifest himself in different ways to mankind. For to Abraham and his posterity, circumcision was commanded: to which the law

of Moses afterwards added ablutions, sacrifices, and other rites. These were the sacraments of the Jews till the coming of Christ: which was followed by the abrogation of these, and the institution of two others, which are now used in the Christian Church; namely, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. I speak of those which were instituted for the use of the whole Church: for as to the imposition of hands, by which the ministers of the Church are introduced into their office, while I make no objection to its being called a sacrament, I do not class it among the ordinary sacraments. What opinion ought to be entertained respecting those which are commonly reputed the five other sacraments, we shall see in a subsequent chapter. Those ancient sacrifices, however, referred to the same object towards which ours are now directed, their design being to point and lead to Christ, or rather as images to represent and make him known. For as we have already shewn that they are seals to confirm the promises of God, and it is very certain that no promise of God was ever offered to man except in Christ; in order to teach us any thing respecting the promises of God, they must of necessity make a discovery of Christ. This was the design of that heavenly pattern of the tabernacle and model of the legal worship, which was exhibited to Moses in the mount. There is only one difference between those sacraments and ours; they prefigured Christ as promised and still expected; ours represent him as already come and manifested.

XXI. All these things will be considerably elucidated by a particular detail. In the first place, circumcision was a sign to the Jews to teach them that whatever is produced from human seed, that is the whole nature of man, is corrupt and requires to be pruned: it was likewise a testification and memorial to confirm them in the promise given to Abraham respecting the blessed seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and from whom their own blessing was also to be expected. (*b*) Now that blessed seed, as Paul informs us, was Christ, in whom alone they relied on recovering that which they had lost in Adam. Wherefore circumcision

(*b*) Gen. xii. 3. xxii. 18. Gal. iii. 16.

was the same to them as Paul declares it to have been to Abraham, even “a seal of the righteousness of faith;” (*e*) that is, a seal for the further assurance that their faith, with which they expected that seed, would be imputed by God to them for righteousness. But the comparison between circumcision and baptism we shall have more suitable occasion for pursuing in another place. Ablutions and purifications placed before their eyes their uncleanness and pollution, by which they were naturally contaminated, and promised another ablution, by which they would be purified from all their defilement: and this ablution was Christ, washed in whose blood we bring his purity into the presence of God to cover all our impurities. (*f*) Their sacrifices accused and convicted them of their iniquity, and, at the same time, taught the necessity of some satisfaction to be made to the Divine justice, and that, therefore, there would come a great High Priest, a Mediator between God and man, who was to satisfy the justice of God by the effusion of blood and the oblation of a sacrifice, which would be sufficient to obtain the remission of sins. This great High Priest was Christ; he shed his own blood, and was himself the victim; was obedient to his Father even unto death, and by his obedience obliterated the disobedience of man, which had provoked the indignation of God. (*g*)

XXII. Our two sacraments present us with a clearer exhibition of Christ, in proportion to the nearer view of him which men have enjoyed since he was really manifested by the Father in the manner in which he had been promised. For baptism testifies to us our purgation and ablution: the eucharistic supper testifies our redemption. Water is a figure of ablution, and blood of satisfaction. These things are both found in Christ, who, as John says, “came by water and blood;” (*h*) that is, to purify and redeem. Of this the Spirit of God is a witness; or rather, “there are three that bear witness, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood.” (*i*) In the water and the blood we have a testimony of purgation and redemption: and the Spirit, as the principal witness, confirms

(*e*) Rom. iv. 11.

(*f*) Heb. ix. 10—14. 1 John i. 7. Rev. i. 5.

(*g*) Heb. iv. 14. ix. 11. x. 1—4. Phil. ii. 8. Rom. v. 19.

(*h*) 1 John v. 6.

(*i*) 1 John v. 8.



and secures our reception and belief of this testimony. This sublime mystery was strikingly exhibited on the cross, when blood and water issued from Christ's sacred side; which, on this account, Augustine has justly called "the fountain of our sacraments;" of which we are yet to treat more at large. And there is no doubt, if we compare one time with another, but that the more abundant grace of the Spirit is also here displayed. For that belongs to the glory of the kingdom of Christ; as we gather from various places, and especially from the seventh chapter of John. In this sense we must understand that passage where Paul, speaking of the legal institutions, says, "which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." (*k*) His design in this declaration is, not to deny the efficacy of those testimonies of grace, in which God was formerly pleased to attest his veracity to the Fathers, as he does to us now in baptism and the sacred supper; but to represent the comparative superiority of what has been given to us, that no one might wonder at the ceremonies of the law having been abolished at the advent of Christ.

XXIII. I will just observe by the way, that the doctrine of the schools, which asserts such a wide difference between the sacraments of the old and new law, as though the former merely prefigured the grace of God, and the latter actually communicated it, ought to be altogether exploded. For the apostle speaks in a manner equally as honourable of the former as of the latter, when he states that the Fathers in the time of Moses "did all eat the same spiritual meat" (*l*) with us, and explains that meat to be Christ. Who will dare to call that an empty sign, which exhibited to the Jews the real communion of Christ? And the state of the case, which the apostle is there discussing, is clearly in favour of our argument. For that no man might dare to despise the judgment of God, in a reliance on a speculative knowledge of Christ, and the mere name of Christianity with its external signs; he exhibits the examples of Divine severity displayed among the Jews, to teach us that the same punishments which they suffered await us, if we indulge in the same sins. Now, that the comparison

(*k*) Col. ii. 17.(*l*) 1 Cor. x. 3.

might be pertinent, it was necessary to shew that there was no inequality between us and them in those privileges of which he forbids us to indulge unfounded boasts. First, therefore, he shews them to have been equal to us in the sacraments, and leaves not a particle of superiority capable of exciting in our minds the least hope of impunity. Nor is it right to attribute to our baptism any thing more than he attributes to circumcision, when he calls it “a seal of the righteousness of faith.” (*m*) Whatever is presented to us in the present day in our sacraments, was anciently received by the Jews in theirs; even Christ and his spiritual riches. Whatever power our sacraments have, they also experienced the same in theirs: they were seals of the Divine benevolence to them, confirming their hope of eternal salvation. If the advocates of the opinion which we are opposing, had been skilful interpreters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, they would not have been so deceived: but when they read there that sins were not expiated by the legal ceremonies, and that the ancient shadows had no power to confer righteousness; neglecting the comparison intended to be drawn, and confining their attention to this single consideration, that the law in itself was unprofitable to its observers, they have simply concluded that the figures were destitute of any truth. But the design of the apostle was to represent the ceremonial law as of no value till it was referred to Christ, on whom alone depended all its efficacy.

XXIV. But they will allege what Paul says of the “circumcision in the letter,” (*n*) that it is in no estimation with God, that it confers no advantage, that it is in vain: for such a representation they conceive to degrade it far below baptism. But this is not true, for all that he says of circumcision might justly be affirmed of baptism. And it is actually asserted; first by Paul himself, where he shews that God regards not the external ablution by which we enter on the profession of religion, unless the heart be purified within and persevere in piety to the end: and, secondly, by Peter, when he declares the truth of baptism to consist, not in “the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience.” (*o*) It will

(*m*) Rom. iv. 11.

(*n*) Rom. ii. 25—29. 1 Cor. vii. 19. Gal. vi. 15.

(*o*) 1 Peter iii. 21.

be objected, that Paul seems in another place utterly to despise "the\* circumcision made with hands," when he compares it with "the circumcision of Christ." (*p*) I reply, that that passage derogates nothing from its dignity. Paul is there disputing against those who required it as still necessary, after it had been abrogated. He therefore admonishes the faithful to leave the ancient shadows, and adhere to the truth. These teachers, he says, urge you to be circumcised in your bodies. But you have been spiritually circumcised both in body and soul: you have the substance itself therefore, which is better than the shadow. Some one might object to this, that the figure was not to be despised in consequence of their having the substance; for that the Fathers under the Old Testament had experienced the circumcision of the heart, and the putting-off of the old man, of which the apostle was speaking, and yet that external circumcision had not been unnecessary or useless to them. He anticipates and supersedes this objection, by immediately adding, that the Colossians had been "buried with Christ in baptism:" by which he signifies that baptism is to Christians what circumcision was to the ancient believers, and consequently that circumcision cannot be imposed upon Christians without injury to baptism.

XXV. But our objectors proceed to allege, that a still stronger argument in their favour arises from what follows, which I have lately quoted, that all the Jewish ceremonies were "a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ;" (*q*) and that the strongest argument of all is what is contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the blood of beasts did not reach the conscience, that "the law" had "a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, and that the worshippers could never attain perfection from the Mosaic ceremonies." (*r*) I repeat what I have already suggested, that Paul called the ceremonies *shadows*, not as if they had nothing solid in them, but because their accomplishment had been deferred till the manifestation of Christ. In the next place, I remark that this is to be understood, not of the efficacy of the ceremonies, but rather of the mode of representation. For

(*p*) Col. ii. 11.(*q*) Col. ii. 17.(*r*) Heb. ix. 9. x. 1, 2.



till Christ was manifested in the flesh, all the signs prefigured him as absent; however he displayed his power, and consequently himself, as present in the hearts of the faithful. But the principal thing to be observed is, that in all these places Paul is not speaking of the subject, considered simply in itself, but with reference to those against whom he is contending. As he was combating the false apostles, who maintained piety to consist in the ceremonies alone, without any regard to Christ; nothing more was necessary for their confutation, than to discuss what value ceremonies possess of themselves. This also was the object pursued by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Let us remember therefore, that the question here does not respect ceremonies, taken in their true and natural signification, but as distorted by a false and perverse interpretation; the controversy is not about the legitimate use, but the superstitious abuse of them. What wonder then is it, if ceremonies, separated from Christ, are divested of all their virtue? For all signs are reduced to nothing, when the thing signified is taken away. So when Christ was addressing those who supposed the manna to have been mere food for the body, he accommodated his discourse to their gross notion, and said that he would give them better food, to nourish their souls with the hope of immortality. (s) If a clearer solution be required, all that has been said may be comprised in these three observations: First, that all the ceremonies of the law of Moses, unless they were directed to Christ, were vain and useless: Secondly, that they had reference to Christ, so that when he was manifested in the flesh, they received their accomplishment: Lastly, that it was necessary for them to be abolished at his advent, as a shadow vanishes in the clear light of the sun. But as I defer the more extended discussion of this subject to the chapter in which I intend to compare baptism with circumcision, I touch the more briefly upon it here.

XXVI. It is possible that these miserable sophists have been led into this error by the extravagant encomiums on the sacraments, which are found in the writings of the Fathers. As when Augustine says, that “the sacraments of the old law

(s) John vi. 27.

only promised the Saviour, but ours give salvation." Not observing that these and other similar forms of expression were hyperbolical, they also on their part have promulgated their hyperbolical dogmas, but in a sense altogether foreign from the writings of the Fathers. For the meaning of Augustine in that passage was the same as in another, where he says, "The sacraments of the Mosaic law announced Christ as afterwards to come, ours announce him as already come." Again: "They were promises of things to be fulfilled; these are signs of things accomplished:" as if he had said, that the old sacraments prefigured Christ while he was yet expected, but that ours exhibit him as present, since he has been already come. Besides, he speaks of the mode of representation, as he also shews in another place, where he says, "The law and the prophets had sacraments announcing something future; but what they celebrated as about to come, the sacraments of our time announce as already come." His sentiments respecting their truth and efficacy he declares in several places; as when he says, "The sacraments of the Jews were different from ours in the signs; in the thing signified, they were equal; different in visible form, equal in spiritual efficacy." Again: "In different signs, the same faith; in different signs, just as in different words: because words change their sounds in different times, and words are no other than signs. The Fathers drank the same spiritual drink as we; though their corporeal drink was different. See then, the signs have been varied without any change in the faith. To them the Rock was Christ; to us, that which is placed on the altar, is Christ. And as a great sacrament, they drank the water flowing from the Rock; what we drink, the faithful know. If we consider the visible form, there was a difference; if we regard the intelligible signification, they drank the same spiritual drink." In another place: "In the mystery their meat and drink were the same as ours; but the same in signification, not in form: because the very same Christ was prefigured to them in the Rock, and has been manifested to us in the flesh." Yet in this respect also we admit that there is some difference between their sacraments and ours. For both testify that the paternal benevolence of God is offered to us in Christ, together

with the graces of the Holy Spirit; but ours testify it in a more clear and evident manner. In both there is an exhibition of Christ, but the exhibition of him in ours is richer and fuller, corresponding to the difference between the Old Testament and the New, of which we have already treated. And this is what was intended by Augustine, whom I quote more frequently than any other, as the best and most faithful writer of antiquity; when he states, that after the revelation of Christ, sacraments were instituted, “fewer in number, more noble in signification, and more excellent in efficacy.” It is right also just to apprise the readers, that all the jargon of the sophists respecting the *work wrought* (*opus operatum*) is not only false, but repugnant to the nature of the sacraments; which God hath instituted, in order that the faithful, being poor and destitute of every good, may come to them simply confessing their wants, and imploring him to supply them. Consequently, in receiving the sacraments, they perform nothing at all meritorious, and the action itself being, as far as they are concerned, merely passive; no *work* can be attributed to them in it.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### *Baptism.*

**BAPTISM** is a sign of initiation, by which we are admitted into the society of the Church, in order that being incorporated into Christ, we may be numbered among the children of God. Now it has been given to us by God for these ends, which I have shewn to be common to all sacraments; first, to promote our faith towards him; secondly, to testify our confession before men. We shall treat of both these ends of its institution in order. To begin with the first: from baptism our faith derives three advantages which require to be distinctly considered. The first is, that it is proposed to us by the Lord, as a symbol and token of our purification, or to express my meaning more fully, it resembles a legal instrument properly attested, by which he assures us that all our sins are cancelled, effaced,



and obliterated, so that they will never appear in his sight, or come into his remembrance, or be imputed to us. For he commands all who believe to be baptised for the remission of their sins. Therefore those who have imagined that baptism is nothing more than a mark or sign by which we profess our religion before men, as soldiers wear the insignia of their sovereign as a mark of their profession, have not considered that which was the principal thing in baptism: which is, that we ought to receive it with this promise; "He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." (*t*)

II. In this sense we are to understand what is said by Paul, that Christ sanctifieth and cleanseth the Church "with the washing of the water by the word:" (*u*) and in another place, that "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost:" (*v*) and by Peter; that "baptism doth save us." (*w*) For it was not the intention of Paul, to signify that our ablution and salvation are completed by the water, or that water contains in itself the virtue to purify, regenerate, and renew; nor did Peter mean that it was the cause of salvation, but only that the knowledge and assurance of it is received in this sacrament: which is sufficiently evident from the words they have used. For Paul connects together the "word of life" and "the baptism of water;" as if he had said that our ablution and sanctification are announced to us by the Gospel, and by baptism this message is confirmed. And Peter, after having said that "baptism doth save us," immediately adds, that it is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God," which proceeds from faith. But on the contrary, baptism promises us no other purification than by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ; which is emblematically represented by water, on account of its resemblance to washing and cleansing. Who then can pretend that we are cleansed by that water, which clearly testifies the blood of Christ to be our true and only ablution? So that, to refute the error of those who refer all to the virtue of the water, no better argument could be found, than in the signification of baptism itself,

(*t*) Mark xvi. 16.(*u*) Eph. v. 26.(*v*) Titus iii. 5.(*w*) 1 Peter iii. 21.

which abstracts us, as well from that visible element which is placed before our eyes, as from all other means of salvation, that it may fix our minds on Christ alone.

III. Nor must it be supposed that baptism is administered only for the time past, so that for sins into which we fall after baptism it would be necessary to seek other new remedies of expiation in I know not what other sacraments, as if the virtue of baptism were become obsolete. In consequence of this error it happened in former ages, that some persons would not be baptised except at the close of their life, and almost in the moment of their death, that so they might obtain pardon for their whole life; a preposterous caution, which is frequently censured in the writings of the ancient bishops. But we ought to conclude, that at whatever time we are baptised, we are washed and purified for the whole of life. Whenever we have fallen therefore, we must recur to the remembrance of baptism, and arm our minds with the consideration of it, that we may be always certified and assured of the remission of our sins. For though when it has been once administered, it appears to be past, yet it is not abolished by subsequent sins. For the purity of Christ is offered to us in it; and that always retains its virtue, is never overcome by any blemishes, but purifies and obliterates all our defilements. Now from this doctrine we ought not to take a licence for the commission of future sins; for it is very far from inculcating such presumption; it is only delivered to those who, when they have sinned, groan under the fatigue and oppression of their transgressions; in order to afford them some relief and consolation, and to preserve them from sinking into confusion and despair. Thus Paul says, that Christ was "set forth to be a propitiation for the remission of sins that are past." (x) He does not deny that we have a constant and perpetual remission of sins in Christ, but signifies that he has been given by the Father, only to miserable sinners, who sigh for the physician to heal the wounds of a guilty conscience. To such the mercy of God is offered: while those, who from a remission of punishment seek to derive an occasion and licence for sinning, do nothing but draw down upon themselves the wrath and vengeance of God.

(x) Rom. iii, 25.

IV. I know the common opinion is, that remission of sins, which at our first regeneration we receive by baptism alone, is afterwards obtained by repentance and the benefit of the keys. But the advocates of this opinion have fallen into an error, for want of considering that the power of the keys, of which they speak, is so dependent on baptism, that it cannot by any means be separated from it. It is true, that the sinner receives remission by the ministry of the Church; but not without the preaching of the Gospel. Now what is the nature of that preaching? That we are cleansed from our sins by the blood of Christ. What sign and testimony of that ablution is there, except baptism? We see, then, how this absolution is referred to baptism. This error has produced the imaginary sacrament of penance; on which I have touched a little already, and shall finish what remains in its proper place. Now it is no wonder if men, whose groveling minds were inordinately attached to external things, have betrayed that corrupt propensity, by a discontent with the pure institution of God, and an introduction of new expedients invented by themselves. As if baptism itself were not a sacrament of repentance: but if repentance be enjoined upon us as long as we live, the virtue of baptism ought to be extended to the same period. Wherefore it is evident, that the faithful, whenever in any part of their lives they are distressed with a consciousness of their sins, may justly have recourse to the remembrance of baptism, in order to confirm themselves in the confidence of their interest in that one perpetual ablution which is enjoyed in the blood of Christ.

V. Baptism is also attended with another advantage: it shews us our mortification in Christ, and our new life in him. For, as the apostle says, "So many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death: therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that we should walk in newness of life." (y) In this passage, he does not merely exhort us to an imitation of Christ, as if he had said, that we are admonished by baptism, that after the example of his death we should die to sin, and that after the example

(y) Rom. vi. 3, 4.



of his resurrection, we should rise to righteousness; but he goes considerably further, and teaches us, that by baptism Christ has made us partakers of his death, in order that we may be engrafted into it. And as the scion derives substance and nourishment from the root on which it is engrafted; so they, who receive baptism with the faith with which they ought to receive it, truly experience the efficacy of Christ's death in the mortification of the flesh, and also the energy of his resurrection in the vivification of the spirit. Hence he deduces matter of exhortation, that if we are Christians we ought to be "dead unto sin, but alive unto God." (z) He uses the same argument in another place; that we "are circumcised, putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," after we have been "buried with" Christ "in baptism." (a) And in this sense, in the passage already quoted, he calls it "the washing of regeneration and renewing." (b) Thus we are promised, first, the gratuitous remission of sins, and imputation of righteousness; and, secondly, the grace of the Holy Spirit to reform us to newness of life.

VI. The last advantage which our faith receives from baptism, is the certain testimony it affords us, that we are not only ingrafted into the life and death of Christ, but are so united as to be partakers of all his benefits. For this reason he dedicated and sanctified baptism in his own body, that he might have it in common with us, as a most firm bond of the union and society which he has condescended to form with us: so that Paul proves from it, that we are the children of God, because we have put on Christ in baptism. (c) Thus we see that the accomplishment of baptism is in Christ; whom, on this account, we call the proper object of baptism. Therefore it is no wonder if the apostles baptised in his name, (d) though they had also been commanded to baptise in the name of the Father and of the Spirit. (e) For all the gifts of God, which are presented in baptism, are found in Christ alone. Yet it cannot be but that he who baptises into Christ, equally invokes the name of the Father and of the Spirit. For we have purification in his blood, because our merciful Father, in

(z) Rom. vi. 11.

(a) Col. ii. 11, 12.

(b) Titus iii. 6.

(c) Gal. iii. 26, 27.

(d) Acts viii. 16.

(e) Matt. xxviii. 19.

his incomparable goodness, being pleased to receive us to his mercy, hath appointed this Mediator between us, to conciliate his favour to us. But we receive regeneration from his death and resurrection, when we are endued with a new and spiritual nature by the sanctification of the Spirit. Of our purification and regeneration, therefore, we obtain, and distinctly perceive, the cause in the Father, the matter in the Son, and the efficacy in the Spirit. Thus John first, and the apostles afterwards, baptised “with the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;” (*f*) by *repentance*, intending regeneration, and by *remission of sins*, absolution.

VII. Hence also it is very certain, that the ministry of John was precisely the same as that which was afterwards committed to the apostles. For their baptism was not different, though it was administered by different hands; but the sameness of their doctrine shews their baptism to have been the same. John and the apostles agreed in the same doctrine: both baptised to repentance, both to remission of sins; both baptised in the name of Christ, from whom repentance and remission of sins proceed. John said of Christ, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;” (*g*) thus acknowledging and declaring him to be the Sacrifice acceptable to the Father, the Procurer of righteousness, and the Author of salvation. What could the apostles add to this confession? Wherefore, let no one be disturbed by the attempts of the ancient writers to distinguish and separate one baptism from the other; for their authority ought not to have weight enough to shake our confidence in the Scripture. For who will attend to Chrysostom, who denies that remission of sins was included in the baptism of John; rather than to Luke, who, on the contrary, affirms that “John came preaching the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins?” (*h*) Nor must we admit that subtilty of Augustine, “that in the baptism of John sins were remitted in hope, but in the baptism of Christ they were remitted in fact.” For as the Evangelist clearly testifies, that John, in his baptism, preached the re-

(*f*) Matt. iii. 6, 11. Luke iii. 3. John iii. 23, iv. 1. Acts ii. 38, 41.

(*g*) John i. 29.

(*h*) Luke iii. 3.

mission of sins, why should we diminish this commendation, when no necessity constrains us to it? But if any difference be sought for in the word of God, the only difference that will be found is, that John baptised in the name of him who was to come; the apostles in the name of him who had already manifested himself.

VIII. The more abundant effusion of the graces of the Spirit, after the resurrection of Christ, contributes nothing to establish a diversity of baptisms. For the baptism administered by the apostles, during his life on earth, was called his; yet it was attended with no greater abundance of the Spirit than the baptism of John. And even after his ascension, the Samaritans, even though they had been baptised in the name of Jesus, received no other gifts of the Spirit than those which were common to all the faithful, till Peter and John were sent to lay their hands upon them. (*i*) I suppose that the Fathers were misled into an opinion, that the baptism of John was merely a preparation for that of Christ, (*k*) entirely from an apprehension that some persons, who had previously received the baptism of John, were baptised again by Paul. But that they were mistaken in this point, shall be very clearly shewn in the proper place. What is the meaning, then, of the declaration of John, that he “baptised with water,” but that Christ would come to “baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire?” (*l*) This may be explained in few words. For he did not mean to distinguish between one baptism and the other, but was comparing himself with the person of Christ; that he was a minister of water, but that Christ was the giver of the Holy Spirit, and would display this power by a visible miracle, on that day when he would send down the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles in the form of fiery tongues. (*m*) What could the apostles boast beyond this? What more can they pretend to, who baptise in the present day? For they are merely ministers of the outward sign, and Christ is the author of the inward grace; as the same ancient writers invariably teach, and especially Augustine, whose principal argument

(*i*) Acts viii. 14—17.

(*k*) Acts xix. 3—5.

(*l*) Matt. iii. 11.

(*m*) Acts ii. 3.



against the Donatists is, that whatever be the character of the person who administers baptism, yet Christ alone presides in it.

IX. These things, which we have stated respecting mortification and ablution, were adumbrated in the people of Israel, whom, on this account, the apostle declares to have been "baptised in the cloud and in the sea." (n) Mortification was figuratively represented, when the Lord, delivering them from the power and cruel servitude of Pharaoh, made a way for them through the Red Sea, and drowned Pharaoh himself, and the Egyptians, their enemies, who pursued, and almost overtook them. For in this manner, in baptism, he promises, and gives us a sign to assure us, that we are extricated and delivered by his power from the captivity of Egypt, that is, from the servitude of sin; that our Pharaoh, that is, the devil, is drowned, though still he ceases not to harass and fatigue us. But as the Egyptians did not remain sunk to the bottom of the sea, but being cast upon the shore, still terrified the Israelites with the dreadful sight, though they were not able to injure them: so this enemy of ours still threatens, displays his arms, and makes himself felt, but cannot overcome. In the cloud there was an emblem of ablution. For as the Lord there covered them with a cloud, affording them refreshment, that they might not faint and be consumed by the overpowering heat of the sun; so, in baptism, we acknowledge ourselves to be covered and protected by the blood of Christ, that the severity of God, which is indeed an intolerable flame, may not fall upon us. Though this mystery was then obscured, and known only to few persons; yet as there was no other way of obtaining salvation but by those two blessings of grace, the Lord having adopted the ancient Fathers as his heirs, was pleased to bestow upon them tokens of both.

X. Now we may clearly perceive the falsehood of the notion which some have long ago disseminated, and which others persist in maintaining,—that by baptism we are de-

(n) 1 Cor. x. 2.

livered and exempted from original sin, and from the corruption which has descended from Adam to all his posterity, and are restored to the same righteousness and purity of nature which Adam would have obtained if he had continued in the integrity in which he was first created. For teachers of this kind have never understood the nature of original sin, or original righteousness, or the grace of baptism. Now we have already proved that original sin is the pravity and corruption of our nature, which first renders us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us those works which the Scripture calls "works of the flesh." (o) Therefore these two things are to be distinctly observed; first, that our nature being so entirely depraved and vitiated, we are, on account of this very corruption, considered as convicted and justly condemned in the sight of God, to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness, innocence, and purity. And therefore even infants themselves bring their own condemnation into the world with them, who, though they have not yet produced the fruits of their iniquity, yet have the seed of it within them: even their whole nature is, as it were, a seed of sin; and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God. By baptism the faithful are certified that this condemnation is removed from them; since, as we said, the Lord promises us by this sign, that a full and entire remission is granted both of the guilt which is to be imputed to us, and of the punishment to be inflicted on account of that guilt: they also receive righteousness, such as the people of God may obtain in this life, that is, only by imputation, because the Lord in his mercy accepts them as righteous and innocent.

XI. The other thing to be remarked is, that this depravity never ceases in us, but is perpetually producing new fruits, those works of the flesh which we have already described, like the emission of flame and sparks from a heated furnace, or like the streams of water from an unfailing spring. For concupiscence never dies or is altogether extinguished in men, till by death they are delivered from the body of death, and entirely divested of themselves. Baptism, indeed, promises us

(o) Gal. v. 19.

the submersion of our Pharaoh, and the mortification of sin; yet not so that it no longer exists, or gives us no further trouble; but only that it may never overcome us. For as long as we live immured in this prison of the body, the relics of sin will dwell in us; but if we hold fast by faith the promise which God has given us in baptism, they shall not domineer or reign over us. But let no one deceive himself, let no one flatter himself in his guilt, when he hears that sin dwells in us. These things are not said in order that those who are already too prone to do evil may securely sleep in their sins, but only that those who are tempted by their corrupt propensities may not faint and sink into despondency; but that they may rather reflect that they are yet in the way, and may consider themselves as having made some progress, when they experience their corruptions diminishing from day to day, till they shall attain the mark at which they are aiming, even the final destruction of their depravity, which will be accomplished at the close of this mortal life. In the mean time let them not cease to fight manfully, to animate themselves to constant advances, and to press forward to complete victory. For it ought to give additional impulse to their exertions, to see that after they have been striving so long, so much still remains for them to do. We conclude, therefore, that we are baptised into the mortification of the flesh, which commences in us at baptism, which we pursue from day to day, and which will be perfected when we shall pass out of this life to the Lord.

XII. Here we say nothing different from what is most clearly stated by Paul in the sixth and seventh chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. For after he had argued respecting gratuitous righteousness; because some impious men concluded from that doctrine that they might live according to their own corrupt inclinations, as we are not accepted by God for the merit of our works, he adds, that all who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ are also regenerated by his Spirit, and that of this regeneration we have an earnest in baptism. Hence he exhorts the faithful not to suffer sin to reign in their members. Because he knew that there always remains some infirmity in them; that they might not be dejected on account of it, he adds for their consolation, that they are not under



the law. On the other hand, as it might seem to encourage licentiousness in Christians, to say that they were not under the yoke of the law, he discusses the nature of that abrogation, and shews what is the use of the law: a question which he had already determined. The sum of all that he says is, that we are delivered from the rigour of the law to adhere to Christ; and that the office of the law is to convince us of our depravity, and lead us to a confession of our impotence and misery. Now because the depravity of our nature is not so easily discovered in a profane man who indulges his corrupt passions without any fear of God, he gives an example in a regenerate man, that is, in himself. He says, therefore, that he has a perpetual conflict with the relics of his corruption, and that he is bound with a miserable servitude, which prevents his entire consecration of himself to an obedience of the divine law; so that he is constrained to exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" If the children of God are captives detained in prison as long as they live, they cannot but feel great anxiety from reflection on their danger, unless there be something to obviate this fear. For this purpose, therefore, he has added a consolation, that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus:" (*p*) by which he teaches, that those whom the Lord hath once received into his favour, incorporated into the communion of his Christ, and introduced by baptism into the society of his church, notwithstanding they are surrounded and assaulted with sin, and even carry sin about within them, yet while they persevere in the faith of Christ, are absolved from guilt and condemnation. If this be the simple and genuine meaning of Paul, there is no reason why we should be considered as promulgating a new or strange doctrine.

XIII. Baptism also serves for our confession before men. For it is a mark by which we openly profess our desire to be numbered among the people of God, by which we testify our agreement with all Christians in the worship of one God and in one religion, and by which we make a public declaration of

our faith; that the praises of God may not only be breathed in the secret aspirations of our hearts, but may also be loudly proclaimed by our tongues, and by all the members of our body, in the different modes in which they are capable of expressing them. For thus all that we have is devoted, as it ought to be, to the glory of God, to which every thing ought to be subservient, and by our example others are incited to the same pursuit. It was with this view that Paul inquired of the Corinthians, whether they had not been baptised in the name of Christ; signifying that in having been baptised in his name, they had dedicated themselves to him, had avowed him as their Lord and Master, and had bound themselves by a solemn obligation before men; so that they could never again confess any other except him, unless they intended to renounce the confession which they had made at their baptism.

XIV. Now as we have stated what was the design of our Lord in the institution of baptism, it is easy to judge in what manner we ought to use and receive it. For as it is given for the support, consolation, and confirmation of our faith, it requires to be received as from the hand of the Author himself: we ought to consider it as beyond all doubt, that it is he who speaks to us by this sign; that it is he, who purifies and cleanses us, and obliterates the remembrance of our sins; that it is he, who makes us partakers of his death, who demolishes the kingdom of Satan, who weakens the power of our corrupt propensities; who even makes us one with himself, that being clothed with him, we may be reckoned children of God: and that he as truly and certainly performs these things internally on our souls, as we see that our bodies are externally washed, immersed, and enclosed in water. For this analogy or similitude is a most certain rule of sacraments; that in corporeal things we contemplate spiritual things, just as if they were placed before our eyes, as it has pleased God to represent them to us by such figures: not that such blessings are bound or enclosed in the sacrament, or that it has the power to impart them to us; but only because it is a sign by which the Lord testifies his will, that he is determined to give us all these things: nor does it merely feed our eyes with a bare prospect

of the symbols, but conducts us at the same time to the thing signified, and efficaciously accomplishes that which it represents.

XV. We may see this exemplified in Cornelius the centurion, who, after having received the remission of his sins and the visible graces of the Holy Spirit, was baptised: not with a view to obtain by baptism a more ample remission of sins, but a stronger exercise of faith, and an increase of confidence from that pledge. (*q*). Perhaps it may be objected, “Why then did Ananias say to Paul, “Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sin,” (*r*) if sins are not washed away by the efficacy of baptism itself? I answer; We are said to receive or obtain that which our faith apprehends, as presented to us by the Lord, whether at the time that he first declares it to us, or when by any subsequent testimony he affords us a more certain confirmation of it. Ananias, therefore, only intended to say to Paul, “That thou mayest be assured that thy sins are forgiven, be baptised. For in baptism the Lord promises remission of sins; receive this and be secure.” It is not my design, however, to diminish the efficacy of baptism; but the substance and truth accompanies the sign, as God works by external means. Nevertheless, from this sacrament, as from all others, we obtain nothing except what we receive by faith. If faith be wanting, it will be a testimony of our ingratitude, to accuse us before God, because we have not believed the promise given in the sacrament: but as baptism is a sign of our confession, we ought to testify by it, that our confidence is in the mercy of God, and our purity in the remission of sins, which is obtained for us by Jesus Christ; and that we enter into the Church of God in order to live in the same harmony of faith and charity, of one mind with all the faithful. This is what Paul meant when he said, that “by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body.” (*s*)

XVI. Now if it be true, as we have stated, that a sacrament is to be considered as received, not so much from the hand of him by whom it is administered, as from the hand of God himself, from whom without doubt it proceeded; we may

(*q*) Acts x. 44—48.

(*r*) Acts xxii. 16.

(*s*) 1 Cor. xii. 13.



conclude that it is not capable of any addition or diminution from the dignity of the person by whose hand it is delivered. And as among men, if a letter be sent, provided the hand and seal of the writer be known, it is of very little importance who and what the carrier of it may be; so it ought to be sufficient for us to know the hand and seal of our Lord in his sacraments, by whatever messenger they may be conveyed. This fully refutes the error of the Donatists, who measured the virtue and value of the sacrament by the character of the minister. Such in the present day, are our Anabaptists, who positively deny that we are rightly baptised, because we were baptised by impious and idolatrous ministers in the kingdom of the Pope, and therefore violently urge us to be baptised again: against whose follies we shall be fortified with an argument of sufficient strength, if we consider that we are baptised not in the name of any man, but in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and consequently that it is not the baptism of man, but of God, by whomsoever it is administered. Though those who baptised us were chargeable with the grossest ignorance or contempt of God and of all religion, yet they did not baptise us into the fellowship of their own ignorance or sacrilege, but into the faith of Jesus Christ; because they invoked, not their own name, but the name of God, and baptised in no other name but his. Now if it was the baptism of God, it certainly contained the promise of remission of sins, mortification of the flesh, spiritual vivification, and participation of Christ. Thus it was no injury to the Jews, to have been circumcised by impure and apostate priests; nor was the sign on that account useless, so as to render it necessary to be repeated, but it was sufficient to recur to the genuine original. They object, that baptism ought to be celebrated in the congregation of the faithful; but this does not prove that it loses all its value in consequence of being partially wrong. For when we teach what ought to be done to preserve baptism pure and free from every blemish, we do not abolish the institution of God, however idolaters corrupt it. For when circumcision was anciently corrupted with many superstitions, yet it ceased not to be considered as a sign of grace; nor when Hezekiah and Josiah assembled together

out of all Israel those who had revolted from God, did they call any of them to a second circumcision.

XVII. When they ask us, what faith we had for many years after our baptism, in order to shew that our baptism was vain, since baptism is not sanctified to us except by the word of promise received in faith; to this inquiry we answer, that being blind and unbelieving for a long time, we did not embrace the promise which had been given us in baptism, yet that the promise itself, as it was from God, always remained steady, firm, and true. Though all men were false and perfidious, yet God ceases not to be true; though all men were lost, yet Christ remains a Saviour. We confess, therefore, that during that time we received no advantage whatever from baptism, because we totally neglected the promise offered to us in it, without which baptism is nothing. Now, since by the grace of God we have begun to repent, we accuse our blindness and hardness of heart for our long ingratitude to his great goodness: yet we believe that the promise itself never expired, but on the contrary, we reason in the following manner: By baptism God promises remission of sins, and will certainly fulfil the promise to all believers: that promise was offered to us in baptism; let us therefore embrace it by faith: it was long dormant by reason of our unbelief; now then let us receive it by faith. Wherefore when God exhorts the Jewish people to repentance, he does not command them, who had been circumcised, as we have remarked, by impious and sacrilegious hands, and who had lived for some time immersed in the same impiety, to be circumcised again: he only urges conversion of heart. For, however the covenant had been violated by them, yet the symbol of the covenant, according to the institution of the Lord, always remained firm and inviolable. On the sole condition of repentance, therefore, they were restored to the covenant which God had once made with them in circumcision; even though they had received it by the hands of the unfaithful priests, and had themselves done all that was in their power to corrupt it and render it ineffectual.

XVIII. But they conceive themselves to be armed with an invincible argument, when they allege that Paul re-baptised

some who had previously been baptised with the baptism of John. (t) For if, by our own confession, the baptism of John was in all respects the same as ours is now; as these persons who had first been erroneously instructed, after having been taught the right faith, were rebaptised into it; so that baptism, which was unaccompanied with the true doctrine, should be considered as nothing, and we ought to be baptised afresh into the true religion, which we have now first imbibed. It is supposed by some, that they had received their first baptism from a pretended and corrupt imitator of John, who had rather baptised them into a vain superstition than into the truth. This conjecture they seem to derive from the confession of those persons that they were entirely ignorant of the Holy Spirit; an ignorance in which it is concluded John would not have suffered his disciples to remain. But it is not probable that Jews, even though they had never been baptised at all, would have been destitute of all knowledge of the Holy Spirit, who is celebrated in so many testimonies of Scripture. The answer, therefore, which they gave, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," is to be understood as equivalent to a declaration that they had never heard whether the graces of the Spirit, respecting which Paul inquired, were given to the disciples of Christ. For myself, I grant that the baptism they had received was the true baptism of John, and the very same with the baptism of Christ; but I deny that they were baptised again. What is the meaning of these words, "They were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus?" Some explain it to be, that they were only instructed by Paul in the pure doctrine; but I prefer understanding it, in a more simple manner, of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that is, of the visible graces of the Spirit given by imposition of hands. It is not uncommon in the Scripture to designate those graces by the appellation of *baptism*: as on the day of Pentecost, the apostles are said to have remembered the words of the Lord respecting the baptism of the Spirit and of fire. And Peter declared that he remembered the same, when he saw those graces poured out on Cornelius and his family and relatives. Nor is this interpretation inconsistent with what is

(t) Acts xix. 1—6.



stated afterwards, that “When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them.” For Luke does not relate two different things; but follows a mode of narration familiar to the Hebrews, who first propose a subject generally, and then unfold it more in detail. This is obvious from the very connection of the words. For he says, “When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came on them.” The latter clause describes the kind of baptism intended in the former. If ignorance vitiate a first baptism, so that it requires to be corrected by a second; the first persons who ought to have been re-baptised were the apostles themselves, who for three years after their baptism had scarcely any knowledge of the least particle of pure doctrine. And among us, what rivers would be sufficient for the repetition of ablutions as numerous as the errors which are daily corrected in us by the mercy of the Lord?

XIX. The virtue, dignity, utility, and end of this mystery, have now, if I mistake not, been sufficiently explained. With respect to the external symbol, I sincerely wish that the genuine institution of Christ had the influence it ought to have, to repress the audacity of man. For, as though it were a contemptible thing to be baptised in water according to the precept of Christ, men have invented a benediction or rather incantation to pollute the true consecration of the water. They afterwards added a wax taper with chrism; exorcism seemed to open the gate to baptism. Now though I am not ignorant of the ancient origin of this adventitious medley, yet it is lawful for me and for all the faithful to reject every thing that men have presumed to add to the institution of Christ. Now Satan, seeing that from the very first introduction of the gospel, his impostures had been easily received by the foolish credulity of the world, proceeded to grosser illusions: hence spittle, salt, and other fooleries, which were publicly introduced with an unlimited licence, to the reproach of baptism. From these experiments we may learn that there is nothing holier, or better, or safer, than to content ourselves with the authority of Christ alone. How much better was it, therefore, omitting all theatrical pomps which dazzle the eyes

and stupefy the minds of the simple, whenever any one was to be baptised, that he should be presented to the congregation of the faithful, and be offered to God in the presence and with the prayers of the whole Church; that the confession of faith, in which the catechumen was to be instructed, should be recited; that the promises which are included in baptism should be declared; that the catechumen should be baptised in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and lastly, that he should be dismissed with prayers and thanksgivings. Thus nothing material would be omitted; and that one ceremony, which was instituted by God, would shine with the greatest lustre, unencumbered with any extraneous corruptions. But whether the person who is baptised be wholly immersed, and whether thrice or once, or whether water be only poured or sprinkled upon him, is of no importance; Churches ought to be left at liberty in this respect, to act according to the difference of countries. The very word *baptise*, however, signifies to immerse; and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient Church.

XX. It is also necessary to state, that it is not right for private persons to take upon themselves the administration of baptism: for this, as well as the administration of the Lord's Supper, is a part of the public ministry of the Church. Christ never commanded women, or men in general, to baptise; he gave this charge to those whom he had appointed to be apostles. And when he enjoined his disciples, in the celebration of the Supper, to do as they had seen done by him when he executed the office of a legitimate dispenser, he intended without doubt that they should imitate his example. The custom, which has been received and practised for many ages past, and almost from the primitive times of the Church, for baptism to be performed by laymen, in cases where death was apprehended, and no minister was present in time, it appears to me impossible to defend by any good reason. Indeed, the ancients themselves, who either observed or tolerated this custom, were not certain whether it was right or not. Augustine betrays this uncertainty, when he says, "And if a layman, compelled by necessity, has given baptism, I know not whether any one may piously affirm that it ought to be

repeated. For if it be done without the constraint of necessity, it is a usurpation of an office which belongs to another: but if necessity obliges, it is either no offence, or a venial one." Respecting women, it was decreed without any exception, in the council of Carthage, that they should not presume to baptise at all, on pain of excommunication. But, it is alleged, there is danger, lest a child who is sick and dies without baptism, should be deprived of the grace of regeneration. This I can by no means admit. God pronounces that he adopts our infants as his children, before they are born, when he promises that he will be a God to us, and to our seed after us. This promise includes their salvation. Nor will any dare to offer such an insult to God as to deny the sufficiency of his promise to ensure its own accomplishment. The mischievous consequences of that ill-stated notion, that baptism is necessary to salvation, are overlooked by persons in general, and therefore they are less cautious: for the reception of an opinion, that all who happen to die without baptism are lost, makes our condition worse than that of the ancient people, as though the grace of God were more restricted now than it was under the law: it leads to the conclusion that Christ came not to fulfil the promises, but to abolish them; since the promise, which at that time was of itself sufficiently efficacious to ensure salvation before the eighth day, would have no validity now without the assistance of the sign.

XXI. What was the custom of the Church before Augustine was born, may be collected from the ancient Fathers. In the first place, Tertullian says, "That it is not permitted for a woman to speak in the Church, neither to teach, nor to baptise, nor to offer, that she may not claim to herself the functions of any office belonging to men, and especially to priests." The same thing is fully attested by Epiphanius, when he censures Marcion for having given women liberty to baptise. I am aware of the answer made to this by persons of opposite sentiments, that there is a great difference between a common usage, and an extraordinary remedy employed in cases of urgent necessity: but when Epiphanius pronounces it to be a mockery, without making any exception, to give women liberty to baptise, it is sufficiently evident that he con-



demns this corruption, and considers it inexcusable by any pretext whatever: nor does he add any limitation, in his third book, where he observes that this liberty was not granted even to the holy mother of Christ.

XXII. The example of Zipporah is alleged, but is not applicable to the case. Because the Lord was appeased after she had taken a stone and circumcised her son, (*v*) it is unreasonable to infer that her action was approved by God. On the same principle it might be maintained, that God was pleased with the worship established by the nations who were transplanted from Assyria to Samaria. But there are other powerful reasons, to prove the absurdity of setting up the conduct of that foolish woman as a pattern for imitation. If I should allege, that this was a single act, which ought not to be considered as a general example, and especially as we nowhere find any special command that the rite of circumcision was to be performed by the priests, the case of circumcision is different from that of baptism; and this would be sufficient to refute the advocates of its administration by women. For the words of Christ are plain; “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them.” (*w*) Since he constitutes the same persons preachers of the gospel and administrators of baptism, “and no man,” according to the testimony of the apostle, “taketh this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron;” (*x*) whoever baptises without a legitimate call, intrudes into another person’s office. Even in the minutest things, as in meat and drink, whatever we do with a doubtful conscience, Paul expressly declares to be sin. (*y*) Female baptism, therefore, being an open violation of the rule delivered by Christ, is a still greater sin; for we know that it is impious to dis sever things which God hath united. But all this I pass over; and would only request my readers to consider, that nothing was further from the design of Zipporah, than to perform a service to God. For seeing her son to be in danger, she fretted and murmured, and indignantly cast the foreskin on the ground, reproaching her husband in such a manner as to betray anger against God. In short, it is plain

(*v*) Exod. iv. 25.

(*x*) Heb. v. 4,

(*w*) Matt. xxviii. 19.

(*y*) Rom. xiv. 23.

that all this proceeded from violence of temper, because she was displeased with God and her husband that she was constrained to shed the blood of her son. Besides, if she had conducted herself with propriety in all other respects, yet it was an act of inexcusable presumption for her to circumcise her son in the presence of her husband, and that husband not a private man, but Moses, the principal prophet of God, who was never succeeded by a greater in Israel; which was no more lawful for her to do, than it is for women now to baptise in the presence of a bishop. But this controversy will easily be decided by the establishment of this principle; that infants are not excluded from the kingdom of heaven, who happen to die before they have had the privilege of baptism. But we have seen that it is no small injustice to the covenant of God, if we do not rely upon it as sufficient of itself, since its fulfilment depends not on baptism, or on any thing adventitious. The sacrament is afterwards added as a seal, not to give efficacy to the promise of God, as if it wanted validity in itself, but only to confirm it to us. Whence it follows, that the children of the faithful are not baptised, that they may thereby be made the children of God, as if they had before been strangers to the Church; but, on the contrary, they are received into the Church by a solemn sign, because they already belonged to the body of Christ by virtue of the promise. If the omission of the sign, therefore, be not occasioned by indolence, or contempt, or negligence, we are safe from all danger. It is far more consistent with piety to shew this reverence to the institution of God, not to receive the sacraments from any other hands than those to which the Lord hath committed them. When it is impossible to receive them from the Church, the grace of God is not so attached to them, but that we may obtain it by faith from the word of the Lord.

## CHAPTER XVI.

*Pædobaptism perfectly consistent with the Institution of Christ and the Nature of the Sign.*

AS some turbulent spirits in the present age have raised fierce disputes, which still continue to agitate the Church, on the subject of infant baptism, I cannot refrain from adding some observations with a view to repress their violence. If any one should think this Chapter extended to an immoderate length, I would request him to consider, that purity of doctrine in a capital point, and the peace of the Church, ought to be of too much importance in our estimation for us to feel any thing tedious which may conduce to the restoration of both. I shall also study to make this discussion of as much use as possible to a further elucidation of the mystery of baptism. They attack infant baptism with an argument which carries with it an appearance of great plausibility, asserting that it is not founded on any institution of Christ, but was first introduced by the presumption and corrupt curiosity of man, and afterwards received with foolish and inconsiderate facility. For a sacrament rests on no authority, unless it stands on the certain foundation of the word of God. But what if, on a full examination of the subject, it shall appear that this is a false and groundless calumny on the holy ordinance of the Lord? Let us, therefore, inquire into its first origin. And if it shall be found to have been a mere invention of human presumption, we ought to renounce it, and regulate the true observance of baptism solely by the will of God. But if it shall be proved to be sanctioned by his undoubted authority, it behoves us to beware lest, by opposing the holy institutions of God, we offer an insult to their Author himself.

II. In the first place, it is a principle sufficiently known, and acknowledged by all the faithful, that the right consideration of sacramental signs consists not merely in the external ceremonies, but that it chiefly depends on the promise and the spiritual mysteries which the Lord has appointed those ceremonies to represent. Whoever, therefore, wishes to be fully informed of



the meaning of baptism, and what baptism is, must not fix his attention on the element and the outward spectacle, but must rather elevate his thoughts to the promises of God which are offered to us in it, and to those internal and spiritual things which it represents to us. He who discovers these things, has attained the solid truth and all the substance of baptism, and thence he will also learn the reason and use of the external sprinkling. On the other hand, he, who contemptuously disregards these things, and confines his attention entirely to the visible ceremony, will understand neither the force nor propriety of baptism, nor even the meaning or use of the water. This sentiment is established by testimonies of scripture too numerous and clear to leave the least necessity for pursuing it any further at present. It remains, therefore, that from the promises given in baptism, we endeavour to deduce its nature and meaning. The scripture shews, that the first thing represented in it, is the remission and purgation of sins, which we obtain in the blood of Christ; and the second, the mortification of the flesh, which consists in the participation of his death, by which the faithful are regenerated to newness of life, and so into communion with him. This is the sum to which we may refer every thing delivered in the scriptures concerning baptism, except that it is also a sign by which we testify our religion before men.

III. As the people of God, before the institution of baptism, had circumcision instead of it, let us examine the similarity and difference between these two signs, in order to discover how far we may argue from one to the other. When the Lord gave Abraham the command of circumcision, he prefaced it by saying, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee;" at the same time declaring himself to be "Almighty," having an abundance of all things at his disposal, that Abraham might expect to find his hand the source of every blessing. (x) These words contain the promise of eternal life, according to the interpretation of Christ, who deduces from this declaration an argument to evince the immortality and resurrection of the faithful. "For God," says he, "is not the

(x) Gen. xvii, 1—14.

God of the dead, but of the living.” (a) Wherefore also Paul, in shewing the Ephesians from what misery the Lord had delivered them, concludes, from their not having been admitted to the covenant of circumcision, that “at that time” they “were without Christ, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God;” (b) all these things being comprehended in that covenant. But the first access to God, the first entrance into immortal life, is the remission of sins. Whence it follows that this promise corresponds with the promise of baptism respecting our purgation. The Lord afterwards stipulated with Abraham, that he should walk before him in sincerity and purity of heart: this belongs to mortification, or regeneration. And to preclude any doubt that circumcision is a sign of mortification, Moses more expressly declares it in another place, when he exhorts the Israelites to circumcise their hearts, because the Lord had chosen them for himself above all the nations of the earth. As God, when he adopts the posterity of Abraham to be his people, commands them to be circumcised, so Moses pronounces it to be necessary to circumcise the heart, thereby declaring the true signification of that carnal circumcision. (c) Then, that no one might attempt this in his own strength, he teaches the necessity of the grace of God. (d) All these things are so often inculcated by the prophets, that there is no need to collect here the numerous testimonies which every where present themselves. We have ascertained, therefore, that a spiritual promise, the very same which is given to us in baptism, was given to the Fathers in circumcision; which represented to them the remission of sins and the mortification of the flesh. Moreover, as we have shewn that Christ, in whom both these things are obtained, is the foundation of baptism; the same must be evident of circumcision. For he was promised to Abraham, and in him the blessing of all nations; and the sign of circumcision was added in confirmation of this grace.

IV. There is now no difficulty in discovering what similarity or what difference there is between these two signs. The promise, in which we have stated the virtue of the signs to consist,

(a) Matt. xxii. 32. Luke xi. 37, 38.

(b) Ephes. ii. 12

(c) Deut. x. 16.

(d) Deut. xxx. 6.

is the same in both; including the paternal favour of God, remission of sins, and eternal life. In the next place, the thing signified also is one and the same, namely, regeneration. The foundation, on which the accomplishment of these things rests, is the same in both. Wherefore there is no difference in the internal mystery, by which all the force and peculiar nature of sacraments must be determined. All the difference lies in the external ceremony, which is the smallest portion of it; whereas the principal part depends on the promise and the thing signified. We may conclude, therefore, that whatever belongs to circumcision, except the difference of the visible ceremony, belongs also to baptism. To this analogy and comparison we are led by the apostle's rule, which directs us to examine every interpretation of Scripture by the proportion of faith. (e) And indeed the truth on this subject is obvious to the slightest observation. For as circumcision was a pledge to the Jews, by which they were assured of their adoption as the people and family of God, and on their parts professed their entire subjection to him, and therefore was their first entrance into the Church: so now we are initiated into the Church of God by baptism, are numbered among his people, and profess to devote ourselves to his service. Hence it is evident beyond all controversy, that baptism has succeeded in the place of circumcision.

V. Now if it be inquired, whether baptism may rightly be administered to infants, shall we not pronounce it an excess of folly, and even madness, in any one who resolves to dwell entirely on the element of water and the external observance, and cannot bear to direct his thoughts to the spiritual mystery; a due consideration of which will prove, beyond all doubt, that baptism is justly administered to infants, as that to which they are fully entitled? For the Lord in former ages did not favour them with circumcision without making them partakers of all those things which were then signified by circumcision. Otherwise, he must have deluded his people with mere impostures. if he deceived them by fallacious symbols; which it is dreadful even to hear. For he expressly pronounces that the circum-

(e) Rom. xii. 3, 6.



cision of a little infant should serve as a seal for the confirmation of the covenant. But if the covenant remains firm and unmoved, it belongs to the children of Christians now, as much as it did to the infants of the Jews under the Old Testament. But if they are partakers of the thing signified, why shall they be excluded from the sign. If they obtain the truth, why shall they be debarred from the figure? Though the external sign in the sacrament is so connected with the word, as not to be separated from it; yet if it be distinguished, which shall we esteem of the greater importance? Certainly, when we see that the sign is subservient to the word, we shall pronounce it to be inferior to it, and assign it the subordinate place. While the word of baptism then is directed to infants, why shall the sign, which is an appendix to the word, be prohibited to them? This one reason, if there were no others, would be abundantly sufficient for the refutation of all opposers. The objection that there was a particular day fixed for circumcision, is a mere evasion. We admit that we are not now bound to certain days, like the Jews; but when the Lord, though he prescribes no particular day, yet declares it to be his pleasure that infants shall be received into his covenant by a solemn rite, what do we want more?

VI. The Scripture however still affords a more certain knowledge of the truth. For it is most evident, that the covenant which the Lord once made with Abraham continues as much in force with Christians in the present day, as it did formerly with the Jews; and consequently that that word is no less applicable to Christians than it was to the Jews. Unless we suppose that Christ by his advent diminished or curtailed the grace of the Father; which is execrable blasphemy. Wherefore the children of the Jews, because they were made heirs of that covenant, and distinguished from the children of the impious, were called a holy seed; and for the same reason the children of Christians, even when only one of the parents is pious, are accounted holy, and according to the testimony of the apostle, differ from the impure seed of idolaters. Now as the Lord, immediately after having made the covenant with Abraham, commanded it to be sealed in infants by an external sacrament, what cause will Christians assign why they

should not also at this day testify and seal the same in their children? Nor let it be objected, that the Lord commanded not his covenant to be confirmed by any other symbol than that of circumcision, which has long ago been abolished. For it is easy to reply, that during the time of the Old Testament he appointed circumcision for the confirmation of his covenant; but that since the abrogation of circumcision, there always remains the same reason for confirming it, which we have in common with the Jews. It is necessary therefore to be careful in observing what we have in common with them, and what they had different from us. The covenant is common, the reason for confirming it is common. Only the mode of confirmation is different; for to them it was confirmed by circumcision, which among us has been succeeded by baptism. Otherwise, if the testimony by which the Jews were assured of the salvation of their seed be taken away from us, the effect of the advent of Christ has been to render the grace of God more obscure and less attested to us than it was to the Jews. If this cannot be affirmed without great dishonour to Christ, by whom the infinite goodness of God has been diffused over the earth, and manifested to men in a more conspicuous and liberal manner than at any former period, we must be obliged to confess, that at least it ought not to be more concealed or less attested than under the obscure shadows of the law.

VII. Wherefore the Lord Jesus, to exhibit a specimen from which the world might understand that he was come to extend rather than to limit the mercy of the Father, kindly received the infants that were presented to him, and embraced them in his arms, chiding his disciples who endeavoured to forbid their approach to him, because they would keep those, of whom was the kingdom of heaven, at a distance from him, who is the only way of entrance into it. But some will object; What resemblance does this embrace of Christ bear to baptism? for he is not said to have baptised them, but to have received them, taken them in his arms, and blessed them: therefore if we desire to imitate his example, let us assist infants with our prayers, but let us not baptise them. But it is necessary to consider the conduct of Christ with more attention than it receives from persons of this class. For it is not to be passed

over as a thing of little importance, that Christ commanded infants to be brought to him, and added as a reason for this command, “for of such is the kingdom of heaven :” and afterwards gave a practical testimony of his will, when, embracing them in his arms, he commended them to his Father by his prayers and benedictions. If it be reasonable for infants to be brought to Christ, why is it not allowable to admit them to baptism, the symbol of our communion and fellowship with Christ? If of them is the kingdom of heaven, why shall they be denied the sign, which opens as it were an entrance into the Church, that being received into it, they may be enrolled among the heirs of the heavenly kingdom? How unjust shall we be, if we drive away from Christ those whom he invites to him; if we deprive them of the gifts with which he crowns them; if we exclude those whom he freely admits? But if we examine how far what Christ did on that occasion differs from baptism, how much greater importance shall we attach to baptism, by which we testify that infants are included in the covenant of God, than to the reception, the embrace, the imposition of hands, and the prayers, by which Jesus Christ himself acknowledged them as his, and declared them to be sanctified by him? The other cavils by which our opponents endeavour to elude the force of this passage, only betray their ignorance. For they argue that as Christ said, “Suffer little children to *come*,” they must have been grown to such an age and stature as to be capable of walking. But they are called by the evangelists *Βρεφν* and *παιδια*, two words used by the Greeks to signify little infants hanging on the breast. The word “*come*” therefore is merely used to denote “*access*.” To such evasions are persons obliged to have recourse, who resist the truth. Nor is there any more solidity in the objection, that the kingdom of heaven is not said to belong to infants, but to those who resemble them, because the expression is, not of *them*, but “of *such* is the kingdom of heaven.” For if this be admitted, what kind of reason would it be that Christ assigns, with a view to shew that infants in age ought not to be prevented from approaching him, when he says, “Suffer little children to come unto me?” Nothing can be plainer than that he intends those who are in a state of real infancy. And



to prevent this from being thought unreasonable, he adds; "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." And if infants be necessarily comprehended, it is beyond all doubt that the word "*such*" designates both infants themselves and those who resemble them. (e)

VIII. Now every one must perceive, that the baptism of infants, which is so strongly supported by the authority of Scripture, is very far from being an invention of men. Nor is there much plausibility in the objection, that it is no where stated that even a single infant was baptised by the hands of the apostles. For though no such circumstance is expressly mentioned by the evangelists, yet on the other hand, as they are never excluded when mention happens to be made of the baptism of any family, who can rationally conclude from this, that they were not baptised? If there were any force in such arguments, women might as well be interdicted from the Lord's supper, because we have no account of their having been admitted to it in the days of the apostles. But in this we are content with the rule of faith. For when we consider the design of the institution of the Lord's supper, the conclusion is easy respecting the persons who ought to be admitted to a participation of it. We observe the same rule also in the case of baptism. For when we consider the end of its institution, we evidently perceive that it belongs to infants as well as to adults. Therefore they cannot be deprived of it without a manifest evasion of the will of the Divine Author. What they circulate among the uninformed multitude, that after the resurrection of Christ, a long series of years passed, in which infant baptism was unknown, is contrary to truth; for there is no ancient writer who does not refer its origin, as a matter of certainty, to the age of the apostles.

IX. It remains for us briefly to shew what advantage results from this ceremony, both to the faithful who present their children to the Church to be baptised, and to the infants themselves who are washed in the holy water; to guard it from being despised as useless or unimportant. But if any man takes it into his head to ridicule infant baptism on this pretext,

(e) Matt. xix. 13—15. Mark x. 13—16. Luke xviii. 15—17.

he holds the command of circumcision, which was given by the Lord, in equal contempt. For what will they allege to impugn the baptism of infants, which may not be retorted against circumcision. But God furnishes us with other weapons to repel their folly: nor does this sacred ordinance of his appointment, which we experience to be a source of peculiar support and consolation to our faith, deserve to be called unnecessary. For this sign of God, communicated to a child, like the impress of a seal, ratifies and confirms the promise given to the pious parent, declaring that the Lord will be a God, not only to him, but also to his seed, and that he is determined to exercise his goodness and grace, not only towards him, but towards his posterity even to a thousand generations. The manifestation here given of the mercy of God, in the first place, furnishes the most abundant matter for the celebration of his glory; and in the second place, fills pious breasts with more than common joy, by which they are excited to a more ardent return of affection to such an indulgent Father, in whom they discover such care of their posterity on their account. Nor shall I regard an objection, if it should be urged, that the mere promise of God ought to be sufficient to assure us of the salvation of our children: since God, who knows our weakness, and hath been pleased in this instance to indulge it, hath decided otherwise. Let those therefore, who embrace the promise of God that he will perpetuate his mercy to their offspring, consider it their duty to present them to the Church to be signed with the symbol of mercy, and thereby to animate their minds to stronger confidence, when they actually see the covenant of the Lord engraven on the bodies of their children. The children also receive some advantage from their baptism, their ingraftment into the body of the Church being a more peculiar recommendation of them to the other members; and afterwards, when they grow to years of maturity, it operates upon them as a powerful stimulus to a serious attention to the worship of God, by whom they were accepted as his children by the solemn symbol of adoption, before they were capable of knowing him as their Father. Finally, we ought to be alarmed by the vengeance which God

threatens to inflict, if any one disdains to mark his son with the symbol of the covenant: for the contempt of that symbol involves the rejection and abjuration of the grace which it presents.

X. Let us now discuss the arguments, with which some violent disputants continue to impugn this holy institution of God. In the first place, finding themselves very hardly pressed and exceedingly embarrassed by the similarity of baptism and circumcision, they labour to establish a considerable difference between these two signs, that one may appear to have nothing in common with the other. For they affirm, first, that different things are signified; secondly, that the covenant is entirely different; and thirdly, that the children are mentioned in a different manner. But when they endeavour to prove the first point, they allege that circumcision was a figure of mortification, and not of baptism; which we most readily grant, for it is an excellent argument in our favour. We urge no other proof of our sentiment, than that baptism and circumcision are equally signs of mortification. Hence we conclude, that baptism was introduced in the place of circumcision, and represents to us the very same thing which that formerly did to the Jews. In asserting a difference of the covenant, with what presumption and absurdity do they corrupt the Scripture, and that not in a single passage, but without leaving any part of it secure from their perversions. For they represent the carnality of the Jews to be such, as to give them a greater resemblance to brutes than to rational beings; contending that the covenant made with them was limited to a temporary life, and that the promises given to them were all confined to present and corporeal enjoyments. If this notion be admitted, what remains but to consider the Jewish people as pampered for a season by the Divine bounty (like a herd of swine fattened in a sty) to perish at length in eternal ruin? For whenever we adduce circumcision and the promises annexed to it, they reply that circumcision was a literal sign, and that the promises connected with it were all carnal.

XI. Certainly, if circumcision was a literal sign, the same opinion must be formed of baptism: for the apostle makes



one no more spiritual than the other. He says to the Colossians, "In Christ ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh;" and this he calls "the circumcision of Christ." In explication of this sentiment he adds, that they were "buried with Christ in baptism." (f) What is the meaning of this language, but that the accomplishment and truth of baptism is the same with the accomplishment and truth of circumcision, since they both represent the same thing? For his design is to shew that baptism was to Christians the same that circumcision had before been to the Jews. But as we have now clearly evinced that the promises of these two signs, and the mysteries represented by them, are precisely the same, we shall insist no longer on this point at present. I will only recommend the faithful to consider, whether that sign ought to be accounted earthly and literal, which contains nothing but what is spiritual and heavenly. But to guard the simple against their fallacies, we shall briefly reply by the way to one objection, by which they endeavour to support this shameful misrepresentation. It is very certain that the principal promises of the covenant, which God made with the Israelites under the Old Testament, were spiritual, and had reference to eternal life: and that they were also understood by the Fathers, as they ought to be, in a spiritual sense, and inspired them with confident hopes of the life to come, towards which they aspired with all the powers of their souls. At the same time we are far from denying that he testified his benevolence to them by terrestrial and carnal advantages, by which we also maintain that their hopes of spiritual promises were confirmed. Thus when he promised eternal blessedness to his servant Abraham, he added, in order to set a manifest token of his favour before his eyes, another promise respecting the possession of the land of Canaan. In this manner we ought to understand all the terrestrial promises which were given to the Jewish nation; so that the spiritual promise may always be considered as the source and foundation, to which the others

(f) Col. ii. 11, 12,

may be referred. But having treated these points more at large in discussing the difference of the Old and New Testaments, I touch the more slightly upon them here.

XII. In the mention of the children they find this variety; that under the Old Testament, those were called the children of Abraham, who derived their natural descent from him; but that now this appellation is given to those who imitate his faith: and that therefore that carnal infancy, which was ingrafted into the fellowship of the Church by circumcision, prefigured those spiritual infants of the New Testament, who by the word of God are regenerated to an immortal life. In this language we discover indeed a small spark of truth; but it is a great error of these persons, that while they lay hold of whatever first comes to their hands, when they ought to pursue it much farther, and to compare many things together, they pertinaciously insist on a single word: hence it necessarily happens that they are often deceived, because they acquire no solid knowledge of any thing. We confess that the natural seed of Abraham did for a time hold the place of those spiritual children which are incorporated with him by faith. For we are called his children, notwithstanding there is no natural relationship between him and us. But if they understand, as they certainly do, that no spiritual blessing was ever promised by God to the carnal seed of Abraham, they are greatly deceived. It behoves us to aim at a more correct sentiment, to which we are directed by the certain guidance of the Scripture. The Lord therefore promised to Abraham, that he should have a Seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and accompanied this promise with an assurance that he would be a God to him, and to his seed. All those, who by faith receive Christ, the Author of the blessing, are heirs of this promise, and are therefore denominated "children of Abraham."

XIII. Though after the resurrection of Christ, the boundaries of the kingdom of God began to be extended far and wide into all nations, without any distinction, that according to the declaration of Christ, the faithful might be collected "from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the

south," to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob;" (g) yet he had embraced the Jews with this great mercy for many ages before, and because he had passed by all others, and selected this one nation, to be for a season the exclusive objects of his grace, he called them his "peculiar treasure" and "special people." (h) In attestation of this beneficence, the Lord gave them circumcision, which was a sign to teach the Jews that he would be their defence and salvation; and the knowledge of this inspired their hearts with the hope of eternal life. For what can be wanting to them, whom God hath taken into his charge? Wherefore the apostle, with a view to prove that the Gentiles are children of Abraham as well as the Jews, expresses himself in the following manner: "Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised." (i) Do not we see that equal dignity is attributed to Jews and Gentiles? For during the time fixed by the decree of God, Abraham was the father of circumcision. When the "middle wall of partition between" them was "broken down," (k) as the apostle says in another place, to give the Gentiles an entrance into the kingdom of God, he became also their father, and that without the sign of circumcision; for instead of circumcision, they have baptism. The express intimation, that Abraham was not a father to them who were of the circumcision only, was introduced by the apostle, to repress the vain confidence of some who neglected all concern about piety, and prided themselves in mere ceremonies. In the same manner, we may now refute the vanity of those who in baptism never carry their thoughts beyond the water.

XIV. But in objection to this, another passage is adduced

(g) Matt. viii. 11. Luke xiii. 29.

(h) Exod. xix. 5. Deut. vii. 6.

(i) Rom. iv. 9—12.

(k) Eph. ii. 14.



from the same apostle, in which he states, "that they which are the children of the flesh" are not "the children of Abraham," but that only "the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (*l*) For this passage seems to imply, that carnal descent from Abraham is nothing, though we attribute some importance to it. But it is requisite to pay more particular attention to the subject which the apostle is here discussing. For in order to shew to the Jews, that the goodness of God was not confined to the seed of Abraham, and even that carnal descent from him was of no value in itself, he alleges, in proof of it, the cases of Ishmael and Esau; who, notwithstanding they were the true offspring of Abraham according to the flesh, were rejected as if they had been strangers, and the blessing remained with Isaac and Jacob. Hence follows what he afterwards affirms, that salvation depends on the mercy of God, which he imparts to whom he pleases; but that the Jews have no reason for satisfaction, or glorying in the name of the covenant, unless they observe the law of the covenant; that is, obey the Divine word. Yet, after having demolished their vain confidence in their descent, knowing, on the other hand, that the covenant which God had once made with the posterity of Abraham could by no means be invalidated, he argues, that the natural descendants are not to be deprived of their dignity; by virtue of which he shews that the Jews were the first and natural heirs of the gospel, only that they had been rejected, as unworthy, on account of their ingratitude, yet that the heavenly benediction had not entirely departed from their nation. For which reason, though they were rebels and violaters of the covenant, yet he calls them holy; such high honours does he give to the holy generation, which God honoured with his sacred covenant; but he considers us, in comparison with them, as the posthumous, and even abortive children of Abraham, and that not by nature, but by adoption; as if a branch broken off from its native tree were engrafted on another stock. That they might not be defrauded of their prerogative, therefore, it was necessary for the gospel to be first announced to them; for they are as it were

(*l*) Rom. ix. 7, 8.

the first-born in the family of God. Wherefore this honour was to be given to them, till they rejected the offer of it, and by their ingratitude caused it to be transferred to the Gentiles. Nor, whatever be the obstinacy with which they persist in opposing the gospel, ought they, on that account, to be despised by us, if we consider that, for the sake of the promise, the blessing of God still remains among them: as the apostle clearly testifies that it will never entirely depart from them; “for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (o)

XV. See now the importance and the estimate to be formed of the promise given to the posterity of Abraham. Therefore, though we have no doubt that the distinction of the heirs of the kingdom from those who have no share in it, is the free act of the sovereign election of God, yet, at the same time, we perceive that he hath been pleased to display his mercy in a peculiar manner on the seed of Abraham, and to testify and seal it by circumcision. The same reason is applicable to the Christian Church. For as Paul, in that passage, argues that the children of the Jews were sanctified by their parents, so, in another place, (n) he teaches that the children of Christians derive the same sanctification from their parents: whence it is inferred, that they who, on the contrary, are condemned as impure, are deservedly separated from others. Now who can doubt the falsehood of the consequence attempted to be established, that the infants who were circumcised in former ages, only prefigured those, who are infants in a spiritual sense, being regenerated by the word of God? Paul does not reason in this manner, when he says, “that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:” (o) as if he had said: Since the covenant made with Abraham relates to his seed; Jesus Christ, in order to execute and discharge the promise once pledged by the Father, came to save the people of the Jews. We see how, even after the resurrection of Christ, Paul understands that the promise of the covenant is to be fulfilled, not only in an allegorical sense, but, according to the literal import of the words, to the na-

(m) Rom. xi. 29.

(n) 1 Cor. vii. 14.

(o) Rom. xv. 8.

tural seed of Abraham. To the same effect is the declaration of Peter to the Jews, "The promise is unto you and to your children," (*p*) and the appellation under which he addresses them, "Ye are the children of the covenant," (*q*) and if children, then heirs. A similar sentiment is conveyed in another passage of the Apostle, which we have already quoted, where he represents the circumcision performed on infants as a testimony of the communion which they have with Christ. (*r*) And, on the contrary principle, what will become of that promise, by which the Lord, in the second precept of his law, declares to his servants, that he will be merciful to their seed, even to a thousand generations? (*s*) Shall we here have recourse to allegories? That would be a frivolous evasion. Shall we say that this promise is cancelled? That would be subversive of the law, which, on the contrary, Christ came to establish, as a rule for a holy life. It ought to be admitted, therefore, beyond all controversy, that God is so kind and liberal to his servants, as, for their sakes, to appoint even the children who shall descend from them to be enrolled among his people.

XVI. The other differences which they endeavour to establish between baptism and circumcision are not only ridiculous, and destitute of every appearance of reason, but are even repugnant to each other. For after they have affirmed that baptism belongs to the first day of the spiritual conflict, but circumcision to the eighth, when the mortification is already completed; immediately forgetting this, they change their story, and call circumcision, a sign of the mortification of the flesh, and baptism, a symbol of a burial, to which none are to be consigned but those who are already dead. Where can we find another instance of such levity of self-contradiction? For, according to the first proposition, baptism ought to precede circumcision; according to the second, it ought to follow it. Yet it is not a new thing for the minds of men to run into such inconsistencies, when they prefer their own dreams to the unerring word of God. We say, therefore, that the first of these differences is a mere dream. If they wished to allegorize on the eighth day, yet there was no

(*p*) Acts ii. 39.

(*q*) Acts iii. 25.

(*r*) Eph. ii. 11, 12.

(*s*) Exod. xx. 6.



propriety in this manner of doing it. It would have been much better to follow the ancients, and refer the number of the day either to the resurrection of Christ, which took place on the eighth day, and on which we know that newness of life depends; or to the whole course of the present life, which ought to be a course of progressive mortification, till, at the termination of life, the mortification also should be completed. It is probable, however, that God deferred circumcision to the eighth day, on account of the tenderness of young infants, whose lives might be endangered by the performance of that rite immediately on their birth. How much more solidity is there in the second position, that, after being dead, we are buried by baptism; whereas, the Scripture expressly teaches, that "we are buried by baptism into death,"<sup>(t)</sup> in order to our entrance on a course of mortification, and continuance in it from that time forward? Nor is there any more propriety in the objection, that, if it be necessary to conform baptism to circumcision, women ought not to be baptized. For if it be evident, that the sign of circumcision testified the sanctification of the seed of Israel, there can be no doubt that it was given equally for the sanctification of males and females. And though only the males were circumcised, they alone being capable of it, the females were in a certain sense partakers of their circumcision. Dismissing such follies, therefore, let us never forget the similarity of baptism and circumcision, between which we discover a complete agreement in the internal mystery, the promises, the use, and the efficacy.

XVII. They consider themselves as advancing a most powerful argument for excluding infants from baptism, when they allege, that by reason of their age they are not yet capable of understanding the mystery signified in it: that is, spiritual regeneration, which cannot take place in early infancy. Therefore, they conclude, they are to be considered in no other view than as children of Adam, till they have attained an age which admits of a second birth. But all these things are uniformly contradicted by the truth of God. For

(t) Rom. vi, 4.

if they must be left among the children of Adam, they are left in death; for in Adam we can only die. On the contrary, Christ commands them to be brought to him. Why? Because he is life. To give them life, therefore, he makes them partakers of himself; while these men, by driving them away from him, adjudge them to death. For if they pretend that infants do not perish, even though they are considered as children of Adam, their error is abundantly refuted by the testimony of Scripture. For when it pronounces that "in Adam all die," (*v*) it follows that there remains no hope of life but in Christ. In order to become heirs of life, therefore, it is necessary for us to be partakers of him. So, when it is said, in other places, that we are "by nature the children of wrath," (*w*) and "conceived in sin," (*x*) with which condemnation is always connected; it follows, that we must depart from our own nature, to have any admission to the kingdom of God. And what can be more explicit than this declaration, "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God?" (*y*) Let every thing of our own, therefore, be destroyed, which will not be effected without regeneration, and then we shall see this possession of the kingdom. Lastly, if Christ speaks the truth, when he declares himself to be "life," (*z*) it is necessary for us to be ingrafted into him, that we may be rescued from the bondage of death. But how, it is inquired, are infants regenerated, who have no knowledge either of good or evil? We reply, that the work of God is not yet without existence, because it is not observed or understood by us. Now it is certain that some infants are saved; and that they are previously regenerated by the Lord, is beyond all doubt. For if they are born in a state of corruption, it is necessary for them to be purified before they are admitted into the kingdom of God, into which "there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth." (*a*) If they are born sinners, as both David and Paul affirm, either they must remain unacceptable and hateful to God, or it is necessary for them to be justified. And what do we require more, when

(*v*) 1 Cor. xv. 22.(*w*) Eph. ii. 3.(*x*) Psalm li. 5.(*y*) 1 Cor. xv. 50.(*z*) John xi. 25, xiv. 6.(*a*) Rev. xxi. 27.

the Judge himself declares that there is no entrance into the heavenly life, except for those who are born again? (b) And, to silence all objectors, by sanctifying John the Baptist in his mother's womb, he exhibited an example of what he was able to do for others. Nor can they gain any advantage by their frivolous evasion, that this was only a single case, which does not justify the conclusion that the Lord generally acts in this manner with infants. For we use no such argument. We only mean to shew, that they unjustly confine the power of God within those narrow limits to which it does not suffer itself to be restricted. Their other subterfuge is equally weak. They allege that, according to the usage of the Scripture, the phrase *from the womb* denotes *from childhood*. But it is easy to see that, in the declaration of the angel to Zacharias, it was used in a different sense, and that John was to be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before he was born. (c) Let us not attempt, therefore, to impose laws upon God, whose power has sustained no diminution, but who is able to sanctify whom he pleases, as he sanctified this child.

XVIII. And for this reason, Christ was sanctified from his earliest infancy, that he might sanctify in himself all his elect, of every age, without any difference. For as, in order to obliterate the guilt of the transgression which had been perpetrated in our flesh, he assumed to himself that very flesh, that he might perform a perfect obedience in it, on our account, and in our stead; so he was conceived of the Holy Spirit, that, having the whole body which he assumed fully endued with the sanctity of the Spirit, he might communicate the same to us. If Christ exhibits a perfect exemplar of all the graces which God bestows upon his children, he will also furnish us with a proof, that the age of infancy is not altogether incompatible with sanctification. But, however this may be, we consider it as clear, beyond all controversy, that not one of the elect is called out of the present life, without having been previously regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit of God. Their objection, that the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures, acknowledges no regeneration, except from "the incor-

(b) John iii. 3, 5.

(c) Luke i. 15.



ruptible seed," that is, "the word of God," (*d*) is a misinterpretation of that passage of Peter, which merely comprehends the faithful who had been taught by the preaching of the gospel. To such persons, indeed, we grant that the word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration; but we deny that it ought to be concluded from this, that infants cannot be regenerated by the power of God, which is as easy to him as it is wonderful and mysterious to us. Besides, it would not be safe to affirm, that the Lord cannot reveal himself in any way so as to make himself known to them.

XIX. But our opponents say; "Faith cometh by hearing," (*e*) of which they have not yet acquired the use, and they cannot be capable of knowing God; for Moses declares them to "have no knowledge between good and evil." (*f*) But they do not consider, that when the apostle makes hearing the source of faith, he only describes the ordinary economy and dispensation of the Lord, which he generally observes in the calling of his people; but does not prescribe a perpetual rule for him, precluding his employment of any other method: which he has certainly employed in the calling of many, to whom he has given the true knowledge of himself in an internal manner, by the illumination of his Spirit, without the intervention of any preaching. But as they think it would be such a great absurdity for any knowledge of God to be given to infants, to whom Moses denies the knowledge of good and evil; I would beg them to inform me, what danger can result from our affirming that they already receive some portion of that grace, of which they will ere long enjoy the full abundance. For if the plenitude of life consists in the perfect knowledge of God; when some of them, whom death removes from the present state in their earliest infancy, pass into eternal life, they are certainly admitted to the immediate contemplation of the presence of God. As the Lord therefore will illuminate them with the full splendour of his countenance in heaven, why may he not also, if such be his pleasure, irradiate them with some faint rays of it in the present life; especially if he does not deliver them from all ignorance before he liberates them from

(*d*) 1 Peter i. 23.(*e*) Rom. x. 17.(*f*) Deut. i. 39.

the prison of the body? Not that I would hastily affirm them to be indued with the same faith which we experience in ourselves, or at all to possess a similar knowledge of faith, which I would prefer leaving in suspense; my design is only to check their foolish arrogance, who presumptuously and securely assert or deny whatever they please.

XX. To strengthen their cause still further, our opponents proceed to allege, that baptism is a sacrament of repentance and faith; and that, therefore, as neither of these can be exercised in infancy, infants ought not to be admitted to a participation of baptism, the signification of which would thereby be rendered vain. But these arguments are directed against God, more than against us. For it is very evident, from many testimonies of scripture, that circumcision also was a sign of repentance, and Paul calls it “a seal of the righteousness of faith.” (g) Let the reason then be demanded of God himself, why he commanded it to be impressed on the bodies of infants. For, as baptism and circumcision both stand on the same ground, they can attribute nothing to the latter which they must not also grant to the former. If they recur to their favourite subterfuge, that the age of infancy then prefigured spiritual infants, it has been already answered. We say, therefore, that since God formerly communicated to infants the rite of circumcision, which was a sacrament of repentance and faith, it appears to be no absurdity for them now to be admitted to a participation of baptism: unless these men wish to offer a direct insult to the institution of God. But in this, as well as in all the proceedings of God, his wisdom and righteousness is sufficiently conspicuous to repress the opposition and detraction of the impious. For though infants, at the time of their circumcision, did not understand the meaning of that sign, they were nevertheless truly circumcised into the mortification of their corrupt and polluted nature, which they were to pursue in mature years. In short, this objection may be answered without any difficulty, by saying that they are baptised into future repentance and faith; for that, though these graces have not yet been formed in them, that the seeds of

(g) Rom. iv. 11.

both are nevertheless implanted in their hearts by the secret operation of the Spirit. This answer at once overturns every argument they urge against us, derived from the signification of baptism: as when they allege the designation given it by Paul, where he calls it “the washing of regeneration and renewing;” (*h*) whence they argue that it ought to be given only to such as are capable of being regenerated and renewed. But we may reply, on the other hand; neither was circumcision, which was a sign of regeneration, to be given to any but such as were already regenerated: and this, in their apprehension, will be to condemn the ordinance of God. Therefore, as we have suggested several times before, whatever arguments tend equally to invalidate circumcision, can have no force in the controversy against baptism. Nor can they escape from any difficulty, by saying, that whatever clearly rests on the authority of God, we ought to consider as fixed and determined, though we can discover no reason for it; but that this reverence is not due to infant baptism, or to other similar things, which are not enjoined upon us by the express word of God; for they will always be held fast by this dilemma. Either the command of God, respecting the circumcision of infants, was legitimate and liable to no objections, or it was deserving of censure. If there was no absurdity in that command, neither can any absurdity be detected in the practice of infant baptism.

XXI. The charge of absurdity, with which they endeavour to stigmatise it, we thus refute. If any of those who are the objects of divine election, after having received the sign of regeneration, depart out of this life before they have attained years of discretion, the Lord renovates them by the power of his Spirit, incomprehensible to us, in such a manner as he alone foresees will be necessary. If they happen to live to an age at which they are capable of being instructed in the true signification of baptism, they will hence be the more inflamed to the pursuit of that renovation, with the token of which they find themselves to have been favoured in their earliest infancy, that it might be the object of their constant attention all their lifetime. In the same sense must be understood what Paul states



in two places, that we are “buried with Christ by baptism.” (i) For he does not mean that he who is to be baptised, must previously be buried with Christ, but simply declares the doctrine which is contained in baptism, and that to persons already baptised; so that it would be unreasonable to argue from those passages, that such burial with Christ must precede baptism. In this manner Moses and the prophets reminded the people what was the meaning of circumcision, though they had received that rite when they were infants. To the same effect is what Paul writes to the Galatians, that “as many as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ.” (k) For what purpose? Why that they might thenceforward live to Christ, who had never lived to him before. And though in adults a knowledge of the mystery ought to precede the reception of the sign, yet a different rule is to be applied to infants, as we shall presently shew. Nor can any other conclusion be drawn from that passage of Peter, which they consider as decisive in their favour; that baptism is “not the putting away of the *filth* of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (l) They contend that this passage leaves not the least room for the baptism of infants, who are not capable of that in which the truth of baptism is here stated to consist. But they frequently fall into this error, of maintaining that the thing signified should always precede the sign. For the truth of circumcision also consisted in the same answer of a good conscience; but if it ought of necessity to precede it, infants would never have been circumcised by the command of God. But by shewing us that the answer of a good conscience is comprehended in the truth of circumcision, and at the same time commanding infants to be circumcised, he sufficiently indicates that it is administered with a view to something future. Wherefore, all the present efficacy to be required in the baptism of infants, is to ratify and confirm the covenant made with them by the Lord. The remaining signification of this sacrament will follow afterwards at the time foreseen and appointed by the Lord.

(i) Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.

(k) Gal. iii. 27.

(l) 1 Peter iii. 21.

XXII. It must now, I think, be evident to every person, that all arguments of this kind are mere perversions of Scripture. Those which remain, and are nearly allied to these, we shall run over in a cursory manner. They object, that baptism is given for the remission of sins: this we admit, and it is completely in favour of our opinion. For being born sinners, we need pardon and remission even from our birth. Now, as the Lord does not exclude infants from the hope of mercy, but rather assures them of it; why shall we refuse them the sign, which is so far inferior to the thing signified? Wherefore, the argument which they urge against us, we retort upon themselves: infants are favoured with remission of sins, therefore they ought not to be deprived of the sign. They also adduce that passage where the Lord is said to “cleanse the Church with the washing of water by the word.” (*m*) But no text could be quoted more conclusive against them; it furnishes an obvious confirmation of our sentiment. If it be the will of Christ that the ablution, with which he furnishes his Church, be testified by baptism; it appears unreasonable that its testimony should be wanting in infants, who are justly considered as part of the Church, since they are called heirs of the kingdom of heaven. For Paul speaks of the whole Church, when he describes it as cleansed with the washing of water. And, on the same principle, from that passage where he says that we are all baptised into the body of Christ, (*n*) we conclude that infants, whom he numbers among his members, ought to be baptised, that they may not be separated from his body. See with what violence, and with what variety of weapons, they attack the bulwarks of our faith.

XXIII. They proceed, in the next place, to the practice of the apostolic age, in which no one is found to have been admitted to baptism without a previous profession of faith, and repentance. For in answer to those who “were pricked in their heart, and said, What shall we do? Peter said unto them,” first, “repent, and” then “be baptised for the remission of sins.” (*o*) In like manner Philip, when the eunuch requested to be baptised, replied, “If thou believest with all thine heart,

(*m*) Ephes. v. 26.(*n*) 1 Cor. xii. 13.(*o*) Acts ii. 37, 39.

thou mayest." (p) Hence they think themselves justified in concluding, that baptism ought never to be administered to any person without being preceded by faith and repentance. But if we adopt this reasoning, the first of these passages, which makes no mention of faith, will evince the sufficiency of repentance alone: the second, where repentance is not required, will prove that faith alone is sufficient. I suppose they will reply that one passage is elucidated by the other, and that therefore they ought to be connected together. I also contend that other places ought to be consulted, which may contribute to the solution of this difficulty. For there are many passages of Scripture, the sense of which depends on the circumstances connected with them. This is exemplified in the cases now under consideration. For the persons addressed by Peter and Philip were of an age capable of exercising repentance and faith. We strenuously deny that such persons ought to be baptised, without a knowledge of their repentance and faith, as far, at least, as they are capable of being ascertained by the judgment of men. But that infants ought to be ranked in a different class, is sufficiently evident; for, under the former dispensation, if any person connected himself with the Israelites in religious communion, it was necessary for him to be taught the covenant of the Lord, and instructed in the law, before he received circumcision, because he was an alien by birth, not one of the Israelitish people with whom the covenant, which was confirmed by circumcision, had been made.

XXIV. So the Lord himself, when he adopts Abraham, does not begin with circumcision, concealing for a time what was intended by that sign; but he first announces the covenant which he designs to make with him, and then, after he has received that promise in faith, makes him a partaker of that sacrament. Why does the sacrament follow faith in the case of Abraham, and in Isaac his son precede all exercise of understanding? Because it is reasonable that a person, who at an adult age is admitted to the fellowship of a covenant, to which he had hitherto been a stranger, should first learn the conditions of it; but this is not necessary in the case of an infant,



who by hereditary right, according to the form of the promise, is already included in the covenant from its very birth. Or, to express it with greater clearness and brevity, if the children of the faithful, without the aid of understanding, are partakers of the covenant, there is no reason why they should be excluded from the sign because they are not capable of expressing their consent to the stipulation of the covenant. This is evidently the reason why God sometimes declares the children descended from the Israelites to be born to himself; (*q*) for he undoubtedly considers as his children, the children of those to whose seed he hath promised to be a Father. But he who is an unbeliever, descended from impious parents, is accounted an alien from the communion of the covenant, till he be united to God by faith. It is no wonder, therefore, if he be not a partaker of the sign, the signification of which in him would be delusive and vain. In this sense Paul tells the Ephesians, that as long as they were immersed in idolatry, they were “strangers from the covenant.” (*r*) The whole of the subject, if I mistake not, may be clearly and summarily stated in the following position; that persons of adult age, who embrace the Christian religion, having been hitherto aliens from the covenant, are not to receive the sign of baptism without the intervention of faith and repentance, which alone can give them an admission to the fellowship of the covenant; but that the infant children of Christian parents, being admitted by God to the inheritance of the covenant as soon as they are born, are also to be admitted to baptism. To this must be referred what is related by the evangelists, that the people “were baptised of John, confessing their sins:” (*s*) an example which we think ought to be followed in the present day. For if a Turk or Heathen were to offer himself to baptism, we would not hastily admit him to that sacrament, without his having first made a confession to the satisfaction of the Church.

XXV. Moreover, they adduce the language of Christ, which is recorded by John, and which they suppose to represent a present regeneration as requisite to baptism: “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into

(*q*) Ezek. xvi. 20. xxiii. 37.

(*r*) Eph. ii. 12.

(*s*) Matt. iii. 6.

the kingdom of God.” (t) See, they say, how baptism is called *regeneration* by the mouth of the Lord. When it is evident, then, that infants are utterly incapable of regeneration, on what pretence do we admit them to baptism, to which regeneration is indispensably necessary? In the first place, they are deceived in supposing that this passage refers to baptism, because it mentions water. For, after Christ had declared to Nicodemus the corruption of nature, and shewn him the necessity of being born again; because Nicodemus was dreaming of a second corporeal birth, he here indicates the manner in which God regenerates us, namely, by water and by the Spirit: as if he had said, By the Spirit who, in the ab-lution and purification of the souls of the faithful, performs the office of water. Nor is this a novel mode of expression: for it perfectly corresponds with that declaration of John the Baptist: “He that cometh after me, shall baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” (v) As to *baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire*, therefore, is to confer the Holy Spirit, who, in regeneration, has the office and nature of fire; so *to be born of water and of the Spirit* is no other than to receive that influence of the Spirit, which does in the soul what water does on the body. I know that others give a different interpretation, but I have no doubt that this is the genuine sense; because the intention of Christ is simply to teach that all must be divested of their own nature, who aspire to the kingdom of heaven. However, if we were desirous of imitating their cavils, it would be easy for us, granting what they require, to retort upon them, that baptism is prior to faith and repentance, because in the words of Christ, water is mentioned before the Spirit. It is certain that this phrase denotes spiritual gifts, and, if these follow baptism, I have established what I wish. But, leaving all subterfuges, let us adhere to the simple interpretation which I have proposed; that no one, till he is renewed with living water, that is, by the Spirit, can enter into the kingdom of God.

XXVI. It is further evident that their notion ought to be exploded, because it adjudges all unbaptised persons to eternal

(t) John iii. 5.

(v) Matt. iii. 11.

death. Let us suppose their tenet to be admitted, and baptism to be administered to adults alone: what, will they say, will become of a youth who is rightly instructed in the first principles of piety, if he desires to be baptised, but, contrary to the expectation of all around, happens to be snatched away by sudden death? The Lord's promise is clear; "Whosoever believeth on the Son, shall not come into condemnation;" but "is passed from death unto life:" (x) we are no where informed of his having condemned one who had not yet been baptised. By this I would not be understood as implying that baptism may be despised with impunity; for, so far from attempting to excuse such contempt, I affirm it to be a violation of the covenant of the Lord: I only mean to evince that it is not so necessary, as that a person, who is deprived of the opportunity of embracing it, must immediately be considered as lost. But if we assent to their notion, we shall condemn all, without exception, whom any circumstance whatever prevents from being baptised, whatever faith they may otherwise have, even that faith by which Christ himself is enjoyed. Moreover, they sentence all infants to eternal death, by denying them baptism, which, according to their own confession, is necessary to salvation. Let them see now, how well they agree with the language of Christ, which adjudges the kingdom of heaven to little children. But though we should grant them every thing they contend for, relative to the sense of this passage, still they will gain no advantage from it, unless they first overturn the doctrine which we have already established respecting the regeneration of infants.

XXVII. But the strongest argument of all in favour of their opinion, they boast, is contained in the original institution of baptism, which they quote from the last chapter of Matthew, where Christ, sending forth his disciples to all nations, gave them a commission, first to teach, and then to baptise, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (y) Then, from the last chapter of Mark, they add,

(x) John iii. 18. v. 24.

(y) Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.



“He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved.” (y) What more do we require, say they, when the language of our Lord clearly expresses that teaching ought to precede baptism, and represents baptism as subsequent to faith? Of this order, an example was furnished even by the Lord Jesus himself, who was not baptised till he was “about thirty years of age.” (z) In what various ways do they embarrass themselves, and betray their ignorance! For it is a mistake, worse than childish, to consider that commission as the original institution of baptism, which Christ had commanded his apostles to administer from the commencement of his preaching. They have no reason to contend, therefore, that the law and rule of baptism ought to be derived from those two passages, as if they contained the first institution of it. Though we should indulge them by admitting this error, yet what force is there in their reasoning? Indeed, if we wanted to evade the force of their arguments, we need not have recourse to any little subterfuge; a most ample field presents itself before us. For while they so violently insist on the order of the words, as to argue, that when it is said “Go teach and baptise,”—and “he that believeth and is baptised,”—the meaning is, that preaching ought to precede baptism, and that faith ought to precede the reception of baptism: why may not we on the other hand reply, that baptising ought to precede teaching the observance of those things which Christ has commanded, because it is said; “Baptise, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” We have remarked the same thing on the declaration of Christ, which has just been quoted, respecting the regeneration of water and of the Spirit; for if it be understood according to their interpretation, it will appear from that passage that baptism is prior to regeneration, because it is mentioned first: Christ teaches that we must be born again, not of the Spirit and of water, but of water and of the Spirit.

XXVIII. Their invincible bulwark, in which they place such great confidence, seems already somewhat shaken; but as the truth may be sufficiently defended by simplicity, I have no inclination to escape with such sophistical and trivial argu-

(y) Mark xvi. 16.

(z) Luke iii. 23.

ments: they shall therefore have a solid reply. The principal command which Christ here gives to his apostles, is to preach the gospel, to which he subjoins the administration of baptism as an appendage. Besides, he says nothing of baptism, any otherwise than as its administration is subordinate to the office of teaching. For Christ sends his apostles to promulgate the gospel to all the nations of the world, that by the doctrine of salvation they may collect, from every land, men who before were lost, and introduce them into his kingdom. But what men, or men of what description? It is certain that there is no mention of any, but those who are capable of receiving instruction. He afterwards adds, that such persons, when they have been instructed, are to be baptised, and subjoins a promise; “He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved.” Is there even a single syllable in the whole discourse respecting infants? What kind of argumentation, then, is that with which they assail us? Persons of *adult* age are to be instructed, in order that they may believe before they are to be baptised: *therefore* it is unlawful to administer baptism to *infants*. It will be impossible for them, with all their ingenuity, to prove any thing from this passage, except that the gospel is first to be preached to those who are capable of hearing it, before they are baptised: for it relates to no others. Let them raise an obstacle from this, if they can, to exclude infants from baptism.

XXIX. But to render their fallacies still more palpable, I will shew the absurdity of them by a very plain similitude. The apostle says, “that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” (a) Now if any man should pretend to infer from this, that infants ought to be deprived of food, would he not deserve universal contempt? Why so? Because it would be a perverse application to all men indiscriminately, of what was spoken of men of a certain class and a certain age. Nor is there any greater propriety in their reasoning in the present case. For what every one sees to belong exclusively to persons of adult age, they apply to infants, in order to make them subject to a rule, which was only prescribed for persons of riper years. The example of Christ is far from affording any sup-

port to their cause. He was not baptised till he was "about thirty years of age." That is true indeed; but the reason is obvious; because he then intended to lay a solid foundation for baptism in his preaching, or rather to establish that which had a little before been laid by John. Intending, therefore, to institute baptism in his doctrine, in order to conciliate the greater authority to his institution, he sanctified it in his own body, and that at the point of time which he knew to be most proper, namely, when he was about to commence his ministry. In short, they can prove nothing else from this circumstance, except that baptism derived its origin and commencement from the preaching of the Gospel. If they approve of fixing the thirtieth year, why do they not observe it, but admit every one to baptism as soon as he is in their judgment sufficiently qualified for it? And even Servetus, one of their leaders, though he pertinaciously insisted on this age, yet began to boast of being a prophet himself when he had only attained his twenty-first year. As though it ought to be tolerated, for a man to arrogate the office of a teacher in the Church before he is a member of it.

XXX. At length they object, that there is no more reason why infants should be admitted to baptism than to the Lord's Supper, which however is not administered to them. As though the Scriptures did not make a considerable difference between the two cases in every respect. Infant communion was practised indeed in the ancient Church, as appears from Cyprian and Augustine: but the custom has very properly been discontinued. For if we consider the nature and property of baptism, we find it to be an entrance or initiation into the Church, by which we are enrolled among the people of God; a sign of our spiritual regeneration, by which we are born again as the children of God; whereas on the contrary, the Supper is appointed for those of riper years, who having passed the tender state of infancy, are capable of bearing solid meat. This difference is very evidently marked in the Scripture; in which, as far as relates to baptism, the Lord makes no distinction of age: whereas he does not present the Supper to the participation of all alike, but only to those who are capable of discerning the



body and blood of the Lord, of examining their own consciences, of shewing forth the Lord's death, and considering the power of it. Do we wish for any thing plainer than what the apostle inculcates in the following exhortation? "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." (b) It must therefore be preceded by examination, which would in vain be expected from infants. Again: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (c) If no persons can be worthy partakers of it, except those who can truly distinguish the holiness of the body of Christ, why should we give to our tender infants poison instead of salutary food? What is that precept of the Lord; "This do in remembrance of me?" (d) What is the inference which the apostle deduces from it? "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (e) What remembrance, I ask, shall we require from infants of that event, of which they have never attained any knowledge? What preaching of the cross of Christ, the virtue and benefit of which their minds are not yet capable of comprehending? Not one of these things is prescribed in baptism. Between these two signs, therefore, there is a considerable difference; such as we observe also between similar signs under the Old Testament. Circumcision, which is known to correspond to our baptism, was destined for infants. The Passover, which has now been succeeded by the sacred Supper, did not admit guests of all descriptions promiscuously, but was rightly eaten only by those who were of sufficient age to be able to inquire into its signification. If our opponents had a grain of sound sense, would they shut their eyes against a thing so clear and obvious?

XXXI. Though I am sorry to burden my readers with such an accumulation of reveries, yet it will be worth while to refute the specious arguments adduced in this controversy by Servetus, one of the most eminent of the Anabaptists, and even the chief glory of that sect. 1. He pretends that the symbols appointed by Christ, as they are perfect, require also

(b) 1 Cor. xi. 28.

(c) 1 Cor. xi. 29.

(d) 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.

(e) 1 Cor. xi. 26.

those who receive them to be perfect, or persons capable of perfection. But the answer is easy; that the perfection of baptism reaches even to death, and cannot with propriety be restricted to one instant of time. I observe also that it is foolish to expect a man on the first day to attain perfection, towards which baptism invites us to proceed by continual advances as long as we live. 2. He objects, that the symbols of Christ were instituted as memorials, that every one may remember that he has been buried with Christ. I answer, that what he has framed in his own head requires no refutation; and that he applies to baptism what the language of Paul shews to be peculiar to the sacred Supper, namely, that every one should examine himself; but that nothing like this is any where said of baptism: from which we conclude, that though by reason of their age, infants are not capable of examination, it is nevertheless right to baptise them. 3. He adduces the declaration of Christ, that “he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;” (g) and concludes that infants who are incapable of believing, remain in their condemnation. I answer, that in this passage Christ is not speaking of the general guilt in which all the descendants of Adam are involved, but only threatening the despisers of the gospel, who proudly and obstinately reject the grace which is offered to them: and this has nothing to do with infants. I likewise oppose a contrary argument: all those whom Christ blesses are exempted from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God; and as it is known that infants were blessed by him, it follows that they are exempted from death. He falsely alleges, as a passage of Scripture, that “Whosoever is born of the Spirit, heareth the voice of the Spirit;” which though we were to admit as a genuine text, yet he could infer nothing more from it, than that the faithful are formed to obedience as the Spirit operates within them. But that which is affirmed of a certain number, it is wrong to apply equally to all. 4. He objects, that because “that is first which is natural,” (h) we ought to wait the proper time for baptism, which is spiritual. Now, though I grant that all the descend-

(g) John iii. 36.

(h) 1 Cor. xv. 46.

ants of Adam, being carnal, bring their condemnation into the world with them, yet I deny that this is any impediment to the communication of a remedy, as soon as ever God is pleased to impart it. For Servetus can shew no divine appointment, that many years shall elapse before the newness of spiritual life can begin: for according to the testimony of Paul, though the infant children of believers are in a ruined condition by nature, yet they are sanctified by supernatural grace. (i) 5. He next produces an allegory, that when David went up to the fortress of Zion, he took with him neither the blind nor the lame, but hardy soldiers. (k) And what if I oppose him with a parable, in which God invites the blind and the lame to the celestial feast, (l) how will he extricate himself from this difficulty? I ask, also, whether the blind and the lame had not previously served as soldiers with David. But it is useless to insist longer on this argument, which the readers will discover from the sacred history to be founded on mere falsehood. 6. Then follows another allegory, that the apostles were “fishers of men,” (m) not of infants. I ask, what is the meaning of that declaration of Christ, that “the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind.” (n) But as I am not fond of allegorical trifling, I answer, that when the apostles were appointed to the office of teaching, they were not forbidden to baptise infants. I would further wish to be informed, since the evangelist uses the word *ανθρωπος* (a word which comprehends all the human race, without any exception) why infants should be denied to be *ανθρωπος* (human beings?) 7. He pretends, that as spiritual things belong to spiritual persons, (o) infants who are not spiritual are not fit subjects of baptism. But here it is evident that he is guilty of a gross perversion of that passage of Paul, the subject of which relates to doctrine. When the Corinthians discovered too much complacency in a vain subtilty, the apostle reproved their stupidity, because they still required to be taught the first principles of Christian doctrine. Who can infer from this, that baptism ought to be denied to infants, whom, though they are born of the flesh, yet God consecrates

(i) 1 Cor. vii. 14.

(k) 2 Sam. v. 6—8.

(l) Luke xiv. 21.

(m) Matt. iv. 19.

(n) Matt. xiii. 47.

(o) 1 Cor. ii. 13.



to himself by gratuitous adoption? 8. He objects, that if they are new men, they ought to be fed with spiritual food. The answer is easy; that they are admitted into the flock of Christ by baptism, and that the symbol of that-adoption is sufficient for them, till they grow to an age capable of bearing solid food: and that it is therefore necessary to wait for the time of that examination, which God expressly requires in the sacred Supper. 9. He next objects, that Christ invites all his people to the sacred Supper. I answer; it is sufficiently clear that he admits none but such as are already prepared to celebrate the remembrance of his death. Whence it follows, that infants, whom he condescended to take into his arms, remain in a distinct and peculiar class, till they grow to riper years, and yet that they are not strangers to the Church. To this he objects, that it is a monstrous thing for a person that is born, not to eat. I reply, that the external participation of the Supper is not the only way in which souls are fed; and therefore that Christ is food to infants, notwithstanding they abstain from the sign: but that the case of baptism is different, by which alone they are admitted into the Church. He further objects, that “a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, giveth them meat in due season.” (*p*) This I readily grant; but by what authority will he determine the time of baptism for us, so as to prove that it is not administered to infants at a proper time? 10. He likewise adduces the command of Christ to his apostles, to hasten to the harvest, while the fields are whitening. (*q*) The sole design of Christ on that occasion was to stimulate the apostles, that seeing the present fruit of their labours, they might exert themselves in their ministry with the greater cheerfulness. Who can infer from this, that the time of harvest is the only time proper for baptism? 11. His next argument is, that in the primitive Church, Christians and disciples were the same persons. (*r*) But here we see that he injudiciously reasons from a part to the whole. The appellation of disciples was given to persons of adult age, who had been already instructed, and had made a profession of Chris-

(*p*) Matt. xxiv. 45.(*q*) John iv. 35—38.(*r*) Acts xi. 26.

tianity; just as the Jews under the law were the disciples of Moses: yet no one can justly infer from this, that infants were strangers, God having declared them to be part of his family. 12. Moreover he alleges, that all Christians are brethren, but that we treat infants as not of that number, as long as we exclude them from the Lord's Supper. But I return to that principle, that none are heirs of the kingdom of heaven, except those who are members of Christ: and that the embrace with which he honoured infants was a true pledge of the adoption, by which they are united with adults, and that their temporary abstinence from the Supper does not prevent them from belonging to the body of the Church. The thief who was converted on the cross was a brother of the faithful, though he never partook of the Lord's Supper at all. 13. He proceeds to assert, that no person becomes our brother but by the spirit of adoption communicated "by the hearing of faith." (s) I reply, that he is constantly reverting to the same false reasoning, by a preposterous application to infants of that which is spoken exclusively of adults. Paul is there shewing that the ordinary method which God uses in calling his elect, and bringing them to the faith, is to raise them up faithful teachers, by whose labours and instructions he extends his assistance to them. But who will dare to impose a law to prevent his ingrafting infants into Christ by some other secret method? 14. He objects, that Cornelius was baptised after he had received the Holy Ghost. (t) But the absurdity of attempting to extract a general rule from this one example, is evident from the cases of the eunuch and the Samaritans, (v) in whom the Lord observed a different order, for their baptism preceded their reception of the gifts of the Spirit. 15. His next argument is worse than absurd: he says that by regeneration we are made gods; (x) but that they are gods to whom the word of God comes, (y) which is not applicable to infants. The ascription of deity to the faithful is one of his reveries, which it is irrelevant to our present subject to discuss: but to pervert that quotation from the Psalms to a sense so remote from its genuine meaning, betrays the most monstrous impu-

(s) Gal. iii. 2.

(t) Acts x. 44—48.

(v) Acts viii. 16, 17, 26, &amp;c.

(x) 2 Peter i. 4.

(y) John x. 35. Psalm lxxxii. 6.

dence. Christ says that the appellation of *gods* is given by the prophet to kings and magistrates, because they sustain an office of divine appointment. But that which is directed to certain individuals respecting the particular charge of governors, this dextrous interpreter applies to the doctrine of the gospel, in order to exclude infants from the Church. 16. He objects again, that infants cannot be accounted new creatures, because they are not begotten by the word. I must again repeat, what I have so often remarked, that the doctrine of the gospel is the incorruptible seed, to regenerate those who are capable of understanding it; but that where by reason of age there is not yet any capacity of learning, God has his different degrees of regenerating those whom he has adopted. 17. Then he returns to his allegories, and alleges that sheep and goats were not offered in sacrifice immediately after they were brought forth. (z) If I approved of the application of figures to this subject, I might easily retort, that all the first-born immediately on their birth are consecrated to the Lord, (a) and that a lamb was to be sacrificed in its first year: whence it should follow, that it is not at all necessary to wait for many years, but that our children ought to be dedicated to God in their earliest infancy. 18. He further contends, that none can come to Christ but those who have been prepared by John. As though the office of John had not been a temporary one. But to pass over this; the children whom Christ took up in his arms and blessed, had certainly no such preparation. Wherefore let him depart with his false principle. 19. At length he calls in the assistance of Trismegistus and the Sibyls, to shew that sacred ablutions are not suitable to any but adults. See what honourable sentiments he entertains respecting the baptism of Christ, which he would conform to the profane rites of the heathens, that its administration might be regulated by the pleasure of Trismegistus. But we have more reverence for the authority of God, who hath been pleased to consecrate infants to himself, and to initiate them by a sacred sign, the meaning of which they were too young to be able to understand. Nor do we esteem it lawful to borrow from the

(s) Exod. xii. 5.

(a) Exod. xiii. 12. Numb. viii. 17,



ablutions of the heathens any thing that may introduce into our baptism the least change of that eternal and inviolable law which God hath established respecting circumcision. 20. In the last place, he argues, that if it be lawful to baptise infants without understanding, baptism may be mimically and jocularly administered by boys in play. But he must contest this subject with God, by whose command circumcision was performed upon infants, before they had attained any understanding. Was it a ludicrous ceremony, then, or a fit subject for the sports of children, that they could overturn the sacred institution of God? But it is no wonder that these reprobate spirits, as if transported with frenzy, bring forward the most enormous absurdities in defence of their errors; for such delusion is the just judgment of God upon their pride and obstinacy. And I trust I have clearly shewn the futility of all the arguments with which Servetus has endeavoured to assist the cause of his anabaptist brethren.

XXXII. No doubt, I conceive, can now remain in the mind of any sober man, that those who raise controversies and contentions on the subject of infant baptism are presumptuous disturbers of the Church of Christ. But it is worth while to notice the object which Satan aims at promoting by so much subtilty; which is, to deprive us of the peculiar benefit of confidence and spiritual joy, which is to be derived from this source, and in the same degree also to diminish the glory of the divine goodness. For how delightful is it to pious minds, not only to have verbal assurances, but even ocular proof, of their standing so high in the favour of their heavenly Father, that their posterity are also the objects of his care? For here we see how he sustains the character of a most provident father to us, since he discontinues not his solicitude for us even after our death, but regards and provides for our children. Ought we not, then, after the example of David, to exult in praise and thanksgiving to God with our whole heart, that his name may be glorified by such an expression of his goodness? This is evidently the reason why Satan makes such great exertions in opposition to infant baptism; that the removal of this testimony of the grace of God may cause the promise which it exhibits before our eyes gradually to disappear, and at

length to be forgotten. The consequence of this would be, an impious ingratitude to the mercy of God, and negligence of the instruction of our children in the principles of piety. For it is no small stimulus to our education of them in the serious fear of God, and the observance of his law, to reflect, that they are considered and acknowledged by him as his children as soon as they are born. Wherefore, unless we are obstinately determined to reject the goodness of God, let us present to him our children, to whom he assigns a place in his family, that is, among the members of his Church.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### *The Lord's Supper and its Advantages.*

**A**FTER God hath once received us into his family, and not only so as to admit us among his servants, but to number us with his children; in order to fulfil the part of a most excellent father, solicitous for his offspring, he also undertakes to sustain and nourish us as long as we live: and not content with this, he hath been pleased to give us a pledge, as a further assurance of this never-ceasing liberality. For this purpose, therefore, by the hand of his only-begotten Son, he hath favoured his Church with another Sacrament, a spiritual banquet, in which Christ testifies himself to be the bread of life, to feed our souls for a true and blessed immortality. Now, as the knowledge of so great a mystery is highly necessary, and on account of its importance, requires an accurate explication; and, on the other hand, as Satan, in order to deprive the Church of this inestimable treasure, long ago endeavoured, first by mists, and afterwards by thicker shades, to obscure its lustre, and then raised disputes and contentions to alienate the minds of the simple from a relish for this sacred food, and in our time also has attempted the same artifice: after having exhibited a summary of what relates to the subject, adapted to the capacity of the unlearned, I will disentangle it from those sophistries with which Satan has been labouring to deceive the

world. In the first place, the signs are bread and wine, which represent to us the invisible nourishment which we receive from the body and blood of Christ. For as in baptism God regenerates us, incorporates us into the society of his Church, and makes us his children by adoption; so we have said, that he acts towards us the part of a provident father of a family, in constantly supplying us with food, to sustain and preserve us in that life to which he hath begotten us by his word. Now the only food of our souls is Christ; and to him, therefore, our heavenly Father invites us, that being refreshed by a participation of him, we may gain fresh vigour from day to day, till we arrive at the heavenly immortality. And because this mystery of the secret union of Christ with the faithful, is incomprehensible by nature, he exhibits a figure and image of it in visible signs, peculiarly adapted to our feeble capacity; and as it were, by giving tokens and pledges, renders it equally as certain to us as if we beheld it with our eyes: for the dullest minds understand this very familiar similitude, that our souls are nourished by Christ, just as the life of the body is supported by bread and wine. We see, then, for what end this mystical benediction is designed; namely, to assure us that the body of the Lord was once offered as a sacrifice for us, so that we may now feed upon it, and feeding on it, may experience within us the efficacy of that one sacrifice; and that his blood was once shed for us, so that it is our perpetual drink. And this is the import of the words of the promise annexed to it: "Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you." The body, therefore, which was once offered for our salvation, we are commanded to take and eat; that seeing ourselves made partakers of it, we may certainly conclude, that the virtue of that oblation will be efficacious within us. Hence, also, he calls the cup "the new testament," or rather *covenant*, in his blood. (*d*) For the covenant which he once ratified with his blood, he in some measure renews, or rather continues, as far as relates to the confirmation of our faith, whenever he presents us that sacred blood to drink.

(*d*) Matt. xxvi. 26, 28, Mark xiv. 22, 24. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25.



II. From this sacrament pious souls may derive the benefit of considerable satisfaction and confidence; because it affords us a testimony that we are incorporated into one body with Christ, so that whatever is his, we are at liberty to call ours. The consequence of this is, that we venture to assure ourselves of our interest in eternal life, of which he is the heir, and that the kingdom of heaven, into which he has already entered, can no more be lost by us than by him: and, on the other hand, that we cannot be condemned by our sins, from the guilt of which he absolved us, when he wished them to be imputed to himself, as if they were his own. This is the wonderful exchange which, in his infinite goodness, he has made with us. Submitting to our poverty, he has transferred to us his riches; assuming our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; accepting our mortality, he has conferred on us his immortality; taking on himself the load of iniquity with which we were oppressed, he has clothed us with his righteousness; descending to the earth, he has prepared a way for our ascending to heaven; becoming with us the Son of man, he has made us, with himself, the sons of God.

III. Of all these things we have such a complete attestation in this sacrament, that we may confidently consider them as truly exhibited to us, as if Christ himself were presented to our eyes, and touched by our hands. For there can be no falsehood or illusion in this word, "Take, eat, drink; this is my body which is given for you; this is my blood which is shed for the remission of sins." By commanding us to take, he signifies that he is ours: by commanding us to eat and drink, he signifies that he is become one substance with us. In saying that his body is given for us, and his blood shed for us, he shews that both are not so much his as ours, because he assumed and laid down both, not for his own advantage, but for our salvation. And it ought to be carefully observed, that the principal and almost entire energy of the sacrament lies in these words; "Which is given for you;—which is shed for you:" for otherwise it would avail us but little, that the body and blood of the Lord are distributed to us now, if they had not been once delivered for our redemption and salvation. Therefore they are represented to us by bread and wine, to

teach us that they are not only ours, but are destined for the support of our spiritual life. This is what we have already suggested; that by the corporeal objects which are presented in the sacrament, we are conducted, by a kind of analogy, to those which are spiritual. So, when bread is given to us as a symbol of the body of Christ, we ought immediately to conceive of this comparison, that, as bread nourishes, sustains, and preserves the life of the body; so the body of Christ is the only food to animate and support the life of the soul. When we see wine presented as a symbol of his blood, we ought to think of the uses of wine to the human body, that we may contemplate the same advantages conferred upon us in a spiritual manner by the blood of Christ: which are these, that it nourishes, refreshes, strengthens, and exhilarates. For if we duly consider the benefits resulting to us from the oblation of his sacred body, and the effusion of his blood, we shall clearly perceive that these properties of bread and wine, according to this analogy, are most justly attributed to those symbols, as administered to us in the Lord's Supper.

IV. The principal object of the sacrament, therefore, is not to present us the body of Christ, simply, and without any ulterior consideration, but rather to seal and confirm that promise, where he declares that his "flesh is meat indeed, and" his "blood drink indeed," by which we are nourished to eternal life; where he affirms that he is "the bread of life," and that "he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever;" (e) to seal and confirm that promise, I say; and, in order to do this, it sends us to the cross of Christ, where the promise has been fully verified, and entirely accomplished. For we never rightly and advantageously feed on Christ, except as crucified, and when we have a lively apprehension of the efficacy of his death. And, indeed, when Christ called himself "the bread of life," he did not use that appellation on account of the sacrament, as some persons erroneously imagine, but because he had been given to us as such by the Father, and shewed himself to be such, when, becoming a partaker of our human mortality, he made us partakers of his divine immortality:

when, offering himself a sacrifice, he sustained our curse, to fill us with his blessing; when, by his death, he destroyed and swallowed up death; when, in his resurrection, this corruptible flesh of ours, which he had assumed, was raised up by him, in a state of incorruption and glory.

V. It remains for all this to be applied to us; which is done in the first place by the gospel, but in a more illustrious manner by the sacred supper, in which Christ offers himself to us with all his benefits, and we receive him by faith. The sacrament, therefore, does not first constitute Christ the bread of life; but, by recalling to our remembrance that he has been made the bread of life, upon which we may constantly feed, and by giving us a taste and relish for that bread, it causes us to experience the support which it is adapted to afford. For it assures us, in the first place, that whatever Christ has done or suffered, was for the purpose of giving life to us; and, in the next place, that this life will never end. For as Christ would never have been the bread of life to us, if he had not been born, and died, and risen again for us; so now he would by no means continue so, if the efficacy and benefit of his nativity, death, and resurrection, were not permanent and immortal. All this Christ has elegantly expressed in these words: "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world:"(f) in which he clearly signifies, that his body would be as bread to us, for the spiritual life of the soul, because it was to be exposed to death for our salvation; and that it is given to us to feed upon it, when he makes us partakers of it by faith. He gave it once, therefore, to be made bread, when he surrendered it to be crucified for the redemption of the world: he gives it daily, when, by the word of the gospel, he presents it to us, that we may partake of it as crucified; when he confirms that presentation by the sacred mystery of the Supper; when he accomplishes within, that which he signifies without. Here it behoves us to guard against two errors: that, on the one hand, we may not, by undervaluing the signs, disjoin them from the mysteries with which they are connected; nor, on the other hand, by ex-

(f) John vi. 51.



tolling them beyond measure, obscure the glory of the mysteries themselves. That Christ is the bread of life, by which the faithful are nourished to eternal salvation, there is no man, not entirely destitute of religion, who hesitates to acknowledge: but all are not equally agreed respecting the manner of partaking of him. For there are some who define in a word, that to eat the flesh of Christ, and to drink his blood, is no other than to believe in Christ himself. But I conceive that, in that remarkable discourse, in which Christ recommends us to feed upon his body, he intended to teach us something more striking and sublime; namely, that we are quickened by a real participation of him, which he designates by the terms of *eating* and *drinking*, that no person might suppose the life which we receive from him to consist in simple knowledge. For as it is not *seeing*, but *eating* bread, that administers nourishment to the body; so it is necessary for the soul to have a true and complete participation of Christ, that by his power it may be quickened to spiritual life. At the same time, we confess that there is no other eating than by faith, as it is impossible to imagine any other; but the difference between me and the persons whose sentiment I am opposing, is this: they consider eating to be the very same as believing; I say, that in believing we eat the flesh of Christ, because he is actually made ours by faith, and that this eating is the fruit and effect of faith: or, to express it more plainly, they consider the eating to be faith itself; but I apprehend it to be rather a consequence of faith. The difference is small in words, but in the thing itself it is considerable. For though the apostle teaches that “Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith,” (g) yet no one will explain this inhabitation to be faith itself. Every one must perceive that the apostle intended to express a peculiar advantage arising from faith, of which the residence of Christ in the hearts of the faithful is one of the effects. In the same manner, when the Lord called himself “the bread of life,” (h) he intended not only to teach that salvation is laid up for us in the faith of his death and resurrection, but also that, by our real participation of him, his

(g) Eph. iii. 17.

(h) John vi. 35.

life is transferred to us, and becomes ours; just as bread, when it is taken for food, communicates vigour to the body.

VI. When Augustine, whom they bring forward as their advocate, said that we eat the body of Christ by believing in him, it was with no other meaning than to shew that this eating is not of a corporeal nature, but solely by faith. This I admit, but at the same time I add, that we embrace Christ by faith, not as appearing at a distance, but as uniting himself with us, to become our head, and to make us his members. I do not altogether disapprove, however, such a mode of expression, but if they mean to define what it is to eat the flesh of Christ, I deny this to be a complete explanation. Otherwise, I see that Augustine has frequently used this phrase; as when he says, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, ye have no life in you: (*i*) this is a figure which enjoins a participation of the sufferings of our Lord, and a sweet and useful recollection in the memory, that his flesh was wounded and crucified for us.” Again, when he says, “That the three thousand who were converted by the preaching of Peter, (*k*) drank the blood of Christ by believing in him, which they had shed in persecuting him.” But in many other passages he highly celebrates that beneficial consequence of faith; and states our souls to be as much refreshed by the communion of the body of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread which we eat. And the very same idea is conveyed by Chrysostom, when he says, “That Christ makes us his body, not only by faith, but also in reality.” For he does not mean that this benefit is obtained any otherwise than by faith; he only intends to preclude a supposition from being entertained by any one, that this faith is nothing more than a speculative apprehension. I say nothing at present of those who maintain the Lord’s Supper to be a mere mark of external profession; because I think I have sufficiently refuted their error, when treating of the sacraments in general. Only let it be observed, that when Christ says, “This cup is the new testament, or covenant, in my blood,” (*l*) this is the expression of a promise calculated for the confirmation of faith: whence

(*i*) John vi. 53.

(*k*) Acts ii. 41.

(*l*) Luke xxii. 20.

it follows, that unless we direct our views to God, and embrace what he offers us, we never properly celebrate the sacred supper.

VII. Nor am I satisfied with those persons, who, after having acknowledged that we have some communion with Christ, when they mean to describe it, represent us merely as partakers of his Spirit, but make no mention of his flesh and blood: as though there were no meaning in these and other similar expressions: "That his flesh is meat indeed; that his blood is drink indeed; that except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us." Wherefore, if it be evident that the full communion of Christ goes beyond their too confined description of it, I will endeavour to state, in few words, how far it extends, before I speak of the contrary error of carrying it to excess. For I shall have a longer controversy with the hyperbolical doctors, who, while in their folly they imagine an absurd and extravagant way of eating the flesh of Christ, and drinking his blood, deprive him of his real body, and metamorphose him into a mere phantom: if, however, it be possible, in any words, to unfold so great a mystery, which I find myself incapable of properly comprehending, even in my mind; and this I am ready to acknowledge, that no person may measure the sublimity of the subject by my inadequate representation of it. On the contrary, I exhort my readers not to confine their thoughts within such narrow and insufficient limits, but to endeavour to rise much higher than I am able to conduct them: for as to myself, whenever I handle this subject, after having endeavoured to say every thing, I am conscious of having said but very little, in comparison of its excellence. And though the conceptions of the mind can far exceed the expressions of the tongue; yet, with the magnitude of the subject, the mind itself is oppressed and overwhelmed. Nothing remains for me, therefore, but to break forth in admiration of that mystery, which the mind is unable clearly to understand, or the tongue to express. I will nevertheless state the substance of my opinion, which, as I have no doubt of its truth, I trust will also be received with approbation by the minds of the faithful.

VIII. In the first place, we learn from the Scriptures, that



Christ was from the beginning that life-giving Word of the Father, the fountain and origin of life, from which all things have ever derived their existence. Therefore John in one place calls him "The Word of life," and in another says, that "in him was life;" (*m*) signifying, that even then he diffused his energy over all the creatures, and endued them with life and breath. Yet the same apostle immediately adds, that "the life was manifested" then, and not before, when the Son of God, by assuming our flesh, rendered himself visible to the eyes, and palpable to the hands of men. For though he diffused his influence over all the creatures before that period; yet because man was alienated from God by sin, had lost the participation of life, and saw nothing on every side but impending death; it was necessary to his recovery of any hope of immortality, that he should be received into the communion of that word. For what slender hopes shall we form, if we hear that the Word of God contains in himself all the plenitude of life, while we are at an infinite distance from him, and, whithersoever we turn our eyes, see nothing but death presenting itself on every side? But since he who is the fountain of life has taken up his residence in our flesh, he remains no longer concealed at a distance from us, but openly exhibits himself to our participation. He also makes the very flesh in which he resides the means of giving life to us, that, by a participation of it, we may be nourished to immortality. "I am the living bread," says he, "which came down from heaven. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (*n*) In these words, he shews, not only that he is life, as he is the eternal Word who descended from heaven to us, but that in descending he imparted that power to the flesh which he assumed, in order that it might communicate life to us. Hence follow these declarations: "That his flesh is meat indeed, and that his blood is drink indeed;" (*o*) meat and drink by which the faithful are nourished to eternal life. Here then we enjoy peculiar consolation, that we find life in our own flesh. For in this manner we not only have an easy access to it, but it freely

(*m*) 1 John i. 1—4.(*n*) John vi. 51.(*o*) John vi. 55.

discovers and offers itself to our acceptance: we have only to open our hearts to its reception, and we shall obtain it.

IX. Now though the power of giving life to us is not an essential attribute of the body of Christ, which, in its original condition, was subject to mortality, and now lives by an immortality not its own; yet it is justly represented as the source of life, because it is endued with a plenitude of life to communicate to us. In this I agree with Cyril, in understanding that declaration of Christ; "As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." (*p*) For in this passage, he is not speaking of the attributes which he possessed with the Father from the beginning, but of the gifts with which he was adorned in the flesh in which he appeared: therefore he shewed that the fulness of life dwelt in his humanity, that whoever partook of his flesh and blood might, at the same time, enjoy a participation of life. For, as the water of a fountain is sometimes drunk, sometimes drawn, and sometimes conveyed in furrows for the irrigation of lands; yet the fountain does not derive such an abundance for so many uses from itself, but from the spring which is perpetually flowing to furnish it with fresh supplies: so the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain, which receives the life flowing from the Divinity, and conveys it to us. Now who does not see that a participation of the body and blood of Christ is necessary to all who aspire to heavenly life? This is implied in those passages of the apostle, that the Church is the body of Christ, and his fulness; (*q*) that he is "the head, from whom the whole body, joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body:" (*r*) that our bodies are "the members of Christ:" (*s*) things which we know can no otherwise be effected than by his entire union both of body and spirit with us. But that most intimate fellowship by which we are united with his flesh, the apostle has illustrated in a still more striking representation, when he says, \* We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (*t*) At length, to declare the subject to be above all description, he concludes his discourse by exclaiming, "This is a great mys-

(*p*) John v. 26.

(*q*) Eph. i. 23.

(*r*) Eph. iv. 15, 16.

(*s*) 1 Cor. vi. 15.

(*t*) Eph. v. 30.

tery." (u) It would be extreme stupidity, therefore, to acknowledge no communion of the faithful with the body and blood of the Lord, which the apostle declares to be so great, that he would rather admire than express it.

X. We conclude, that our souls are fed by the flesh and blood of Christ, just as our corporeal life is preserved and sustained by bread and wine. For otherwise there would be no suitableness in the analogy of the sign, if our souls did not find their food in Christ; which cannot be the case unless Christ truly becomes one with us, and refreshes us by the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood. Though it appears incredible for the flesh of Christ, from such an immense local distance, to reach us, so as to become our food, we should remember how much the secret power of the Holy Spirit transcends all our senses, and what folly it is to apply any measure of ours to his immensity. Let our faith receive, therefore, what our understanding is not able to comprehend, that the Spirit really unites things which are separated by local distance. Now that holy participation of his flesh and blood, by which Christ communicates his life to us, just as if he actually penetrated every part of our frame, in the sacred supper he also testifies and seals; and that not by the exhibition of a vain or ineffectual sign, but by the exertion of the energy of his Spirit, by which he accomplishes that which he promises. And the thing signified he exhibits and offers to all who come to that spiritual banquet; though it is advantageously enjoyed by the faithful alone, who receive such great goodness with true faith and gratitude of mind. For which reason the apostle said; "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (v) Nor is there any cause to object, that it is a figurative expression, by which the name of the thing signified is given to the sign. I grant, indeed, that the breaking of the bread is symbolical, and not the substance itself: yet, this being admitted, from the exhibition of the symbol we may justly infer the exhibition of the substance; for, unless any one would call God a deceiver, he can

(u) Eph. v. 32.

(v) 1 Cor. x. 16.



never presume to affirm that he sets before us an empty sign. Therefore, if by the breaking of the bread, the Lord truly represents the participation of his body, it ought not to be doubted that he truly presents and communicates it. And it must always be a rule with the faithful, whenever they see the signs instituted by the Lord, to assure and persuade themselves that they are also accompanied with the truth of the thing signified. For to what end would the Lord deliver into our hands the symbol of his body, except to assure us of a real participation of it? If it be true that the visible sign is given to us to seal the donation of the invisible substance, we ought to entertain a confident assurance, that in receiving the symbol of his body, we at the same time truly receive the body itself.

XI. In harmony, therefore, with the doctrine which has always been received in the Church, and which is maintained in the present day by all who hold right sentiments, I say, that the sacred mystery of the Supper consists of two parts; the corporeal signs, which, being placed before our eyes, represent to us invisible things in a manner adapted to the weakness of our capacities; and the spiritual truth, which is at the same time typified and exhibited by those symbols. When I intend to give a familiar view of this truth, I am accustomed to state three particulars which it includes: the signification; the matter, or substance, which depends on the signification; and the virtue or effect, which follows from both. The signification consists in the promises, which are interwoven with the sign. What I call the matter or substance, is Christ, with his death and resurrection. By the effect, I mean redemption, righteousness, sanctification, eternal life, and all the other benefits which Christ confers upon us. Now, though all these things are connected with faith, yet I leave no room for this cavil; as though, when I say that Christ is received by faith, I intended that he is received merely in the understanding and imagination: for the promises present him to us, not that we may rest in mere contemplation and simple knowledge, but that we may enjoy a real participation of him. And, in fact, I see not how any man can attain a solid confidence that he has redemption and righteousness in the cross of Christ, and life in his death, unless he first has a real communion with

Christ himself: for those blessings would never be imparted to us, if Christ did not first make himself ours. I say, therefore, that in the mystery of the Supper, under the symbols of bread and wine, Christ is truly exhibited to us, even his body and blood, in which he has fulfilled all obedience to procure our justification. And the design of this exhibition is, first, that we may be united into one body with him, and, secondly, that being made partakers of his substance, we may experience his power in the communication of all blessings.

XII. I now proceed to the hyperbolical additions which superstition has made to this sacrament. For here Satan has exerted amazing subtlety to withdraw the minds of men from heaven, and involve them in a preposterous error, by persuading them that Christ is attached to the element of bread. In the first place, we must be careful not to dream of such a presence of Christ in the sacrament, as the ingenuity of the Romanists has invented; as if the body of Christ were exhibited, by a local presence, to be felt by the hand, bruised by the teeth, and swallowed by the throat. For this was the form of recantation which Pope Nicolas directed to Berengarius as a declaration of his repentance: the language of which is so monstrous, that the scholiast exclaims, that there is danger, unless the readers be very prudent and cautious, of their imbibing from it a worse heresy than that of Berengarius; and Peter Lombard, though he takes great pains to defend it from the charge of absurdity, yet rather inclines to a different opinion. For, as we have not the least doubt that Christ's body is finite, according to the invariable condition of a human body, and is contained in heaven where it was once received, till it shall return to judgment; so we esteem it utterly unlawful to bring it back under these corruptible elements, or to imagine it to be present every where. Nor is there any need of this, in order to our enjoying the participation of it; since the Lord by his Spirit gives us the privilege of being united with himself in body, soul, and spirit. The bond of this union, therefore, is the Spirit of Christ, by whom we are conjoined, and who is, as it were, the channel by which all that Christ himself is and has is conveyed to us. For if we behold the sun darting his rays and transmitting his substance, as it were, in them, to generate,

nourish, and mature the roots of the earth; why should the irradiation of the Spirit of Christ be less effectual to convey to us the communication of his body and blood? Wherefore, the Scripture, when it speaks of our participation of Christ, attributes all the power of it to the Spirit. One passage shall suffice instead of many. In the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, Paul represents Christ as dwelling in us no otherwise than by his Spirit. (*w*) By this representation, the apostle does not destroy that communion of the body and blood of Christ, of which we are now treating, but teaches that it is solely owing to the agency of the Spirit that we possess Christ with all his benefits, and have him dwelling within us.

XIII. Deterred by a horror of such barbarous impiety, the schoolmen have expressed themselves in more modest language, yet they only trifle with equal fallacy and greater subtilty. They admit that Christ is not contained in the bread and wine in a local or corporeal manner: but they afterwards invent a manner, which they neither understand themselves nor can explain to others; which, however, amounts to this, that Christ is to be sought, as they express it, in the form of bread. When they say that the substance of bread is transmuted into Christ, do they not attach his substance to the whiteness, which they pretend is all that remains of the bread. But, they say, he is so contained in the sacrament, that he remains in heaven, and we maintain no other presence than of *habitude*. But whatever words they employ to gloss over their notions, they all terminate in this, that, by the consecration, that which was before bread becomes Christ, so that the substance of Christ is concealed under the colour of bread. This they are not ashamed to express in plain terms; for Lombard says, "That the body of Christ, which is visible in itself, is hidden and concealed, after the consecration, under the form of bread." Thus the figure of the bread is nothing but a veil, which prevents the flesh from being seen. Nor is there any need of many conjectures, to discover what snares they intended to lay in these words, which the thing itself plainly evinces. For it is evident in what profound superstition not only the people in



general, but even the principal men, have now for several ages been involved, and are involved at the present day, in the papal churches. True faith, which is the sole medium of our union and communion with Christ, being an object of little solicitude to them, provided they have that carnal presence which they have fabricated without any authority from the divine word, they consider him as sufficiently present with them. The consequence of this ingenious subtilty, therefore, we find to be this, that bread has been taken for God.

XIV. Hence proceeded that pretended transubstantiation, for which they now contend with more earnestness than for all the other articles of their faith. For the first inventors of the local presence were unable to explain how the body of Christ could be mixed with the substance of the bread, without being immediately embarrassed by many absurdities. Therefore, they found it necessary to have recourse to this fiction, that the bread is transmuted into the body of Christ; not that his body is properly made of the bread, but that Christ annihilates the substance of the bread and conceals himself under its form. It is astonishing that they could fall into such ignorance and even stupidity, as to promulgate such a monstrous notion, in direct opposition to the Scripture and to the doctrine of the primitive Church. I confess, indeed, that some of the ancient writers sometimes used the word *conversion*, not with a view to destroy the substance of the external signs, but to signify that the bread dedicated to that sacrament is unlike common bread, and different from what it was before. But they all constantly and expressly declare, that the sacred supper consists of two parts, earthly and heavenly; and the earthly part they explain, without the least hesitation, to be bread and wine. Whatever the Romanists may pretend, it is very clear that the authority of the ancients, which they frequently presume to oppose to the plain word of God, affords them no assistance in the support of this enigma: and, indeed, it is comparatively but of recent invention, for it was not only unknown to those better times, when the doctrine of religion still flourished in its purity, but even when that purity had already been much corrupted. There is not one of the ancient writers, who does not acknowledge in express terms that the consecrated symbols

of the supper are bread and wine; though, as we have observed, they sometimes distinguish them with various titles to celebrate the dignity of the mystery. For when they say, that a secret *conversion* takes place in the consecration, so that they are something different from bread and wine; I have already stated their meaning to be, not that the bread and wine are annihilated, but that they are to be considered in a different light from common aliments, which are merely designed for the nourishment of the body; because, in those elements, we are presented with the spiritual meat and drink of the soul. In this we also coincide. But, say our opponents, if there be a conversion, one thing must be changed into another. If they mean that something is made what it was not before, I agree with them. If they wish to apply this to their absurd notion, let them tell me what change they think takes place in baptism. For in that also the Fathers state a wonderful conversion, when they say, that from the corruptible element proceeds a spiritual ablution of the soul, yet not one of them denies that it retains the substance of water. But there is no such declaration, they say, respecting baptism as there is respecting the supper; "This is my body." As though the question related to those words, which have a meaning obvious enough, and not rather to the conversion or change spoken of, which ought to signify no more in the supper than in baptism. Let them cease their verbal subtilties, therefore, which only betray their own absurdity. Indeed there would be no consistency in the signification, if the external sign were not a living image of the truth which is represented in it. By the external sign, Christ intended to declare that his flesh is meat. If he were to set before us a mere spectre of bread, and not real bread, where would be the analogy or similitude, which ought to lead us from the visible emblem to the invisible substance? For, to preserve the correspondence complete, the signification would extend no further than that we should be fed with an appearance of the flesh of Christ. As in baptism, if there were nothing but an appearance of water to deceive our eyes, we should have no certain pledge of our ablution; and such an illusive representation we should find a source of painful uncertainty. The nature of the sacrament, therefore, is sub-

verted, unless the earthly sign correspond in its signification to the heavenly substance: and, consequently, we lose the truth of this mystery, unless the true body of Christ be represented by real bread. I repeat it again; since the sacred Supper is nothing but a visible attestation of the promise, that Christ is "the bread of life—which cometh down from heaven," (x) it requires the use of visible and material bread to represent that which is spiritual; unless we are determined, that the means which God kindly affords to support our weakness shall be altogether unavailing to us. With what reason could Paul conclude that "we being many, are one bread, for we are all partakers of that one bread," (y) if there were nothing but a mere phantom of bread, and not the true and real substance of it?

XV. They would never have been so shamefully deluded by the fallacies of Satan, if they had not been previously fascinated with this error; that the body of Christ contained in the bread was received in a corporeal manner into the mouth, and actually swallowed. The cause of such a stupid notion was, that they considered the consecration as a kind of magical incantation. But they were unacquainted with this principle, that the bread is a sacrament only to those to whom the word is addressed; as the water of baptism is not changed in itself, but on the annexation of the promise begins to be to us that which it was not before. This will be further elucidated by the example of a similar sacrament. The water which flowed from the rock in the wilderness, was to the fathers a token and sign of the same thing which is represented to us by the wine in the sacred supper; for Paul says, "They did drink the same spiritual drink." (z) But the same water served also for their flocks and herds. Hence it is easily inferred, that when earthly elements are applied to a spiritual use, no other change takes place in them than with regard to *men*, to whom they become seals of the promises. Besides, since the design of God is, as I have often repeated, by suitable vehicles to elevate us to himself, this object is impiously frustrated by the obstinacy of those who invite us to Christ indeed, but invisibly concealed under the form of bread. It is not possible for the

(x) John vi. 35, 50.

(y) 1 Cor. x. 17.

(z) 1 Cor. x. 4.



human mind to overcome the immensity of local distance, and to penetrate to Christ in the highest heavens. What nature denied them, they attempted to correct by a remedy yet more pernicious, that while remaining on the earth, they might attain a proximity to Christ without any need of ascending to heaven. This is all the necessity which constrained them to metamorphose the body of Christ. In the time of Bernard, though a harsh mode of expression had been adopted, still transubstantiation was yet unknown: and in all preceding ages it was a common similitude, in the mouths of all, that in this sacrament the body and blood of Christ were spiritually united with the bread and wine. They argue respecting the terms, in their own apprehension, with great acuteness, but without adducing any thing applicable to the present subject. The rod of Moses, they say, though it took the form of a serpent, still retained its original name, and was called a rod. (a) So they think it equally probable, that though the bread be changed into another substance, yet it may by a catechesis, without any violation of propriety, be denominated according to its visible appearance. But what similitude or connection can they discover between that illustrious miracle and their fictitious illusion, which no eye in heaven or earth witnesses? The magicians had practised their sorceries, so that the Egyptians believed them to possess a divine power to effect changes in the creatures above the order of nature. Moses confronted them, and defeating all their enchantments, shewed the invincible power of God to be on his side; because his one rod swallowed up all the rest. But that being a transmutation visible to the eye, makes nothing to the present argument, as we have already observed; and the rod soon after returned to its original form. Moreover it is not known whether that was in reality a temporary transmutation of substance, or not. The allusion to the rods of the magicians deserves also to be observed, for Moses says, that "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods:" he would not call them serpents, lest he might appear to imply a transmutation which did not exist; for those impostors had done nothing but dazzle the eyes of the specta-

(a) Exod. iv. 2—4. vii. 10, 12.

tors. What resemblance has this to the following and other similar expressions: “The bread which we break;” (b) “As often as ye eat this bread;” (c) “They continued in breaking of bread?” (d) It is certain that their eyes were only deceived by the incantations of the magicians. There is greater uncertainty with respect to Moses, by whose hand it was no more difficult for God to make a rod into a serpent, and afterwards to make the serpent into a rod again, than to invest angels with material bodies, and soon after to disembody them again. If the nature of this sacrament were the same, or bore any affinity to the case we have mentioned, our opponents would have some colour for their solution. We must therefore consider it as a fixed principle, that the flesh of Christ is not truly promised to us for food in the sacred supper, unless the true substance of the external symbol corresponds to it. And as one error gives birth to another, a passage of Jeremiah is so stupidly perverted, in order to prove transubstantiation, that I am ashamed to recite it. The prophet complains that wood was put in his bread; (e) signifying that his enemies by their cruelty had taken away all the relish of his food: as David in a similar figure utters the following complaint: “They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” (f) These disputants explain it as an allegory, that the body of Christ was affixed to the wood of the cross; and this, they say, was the opinion of some of the Fathers. I reply, we ought rather to pardon their ignorance, and bury their disgrace in oblivion, than to add the effrontery of constraining them continually to combat the genuine meaning of the prophet.

XVI. Others, who perceive it to be impossible to destroy the analogy of the sign and the thing signified, without subverting the truth of the mystery, acknowledge that the bread in the sacred supper is the true substance of that earthly and corruptible element, and undergoes no change in itself; but they maintain that it has the body of Christ included under it. If they explained their meaning to be, that when the bread is presented in the sacrament, it is attended with an exhibition

(b) 1 Cor. x. 16.

(c) 1 Cor. xi. 26.

(d) Acts ii. 42.

(e) Jer. xi. 19.

(f) Psalm lxi. 21.

of the body of Christ, because the truth represented is inseparable from its sign; I should make little objection: but as by placing the body itself in the bread, they attribute ubiquity to it, which is incompatible with its nature, and by stating it to be *under the bread*, represent it as lying concealed in it; it is necessary to unmask such subtilties: not that it is my intention to enter on a professed examination of the whole of this subject at present; I shall only lay the foundations of the discussion, which will follow in its proper place. They maintain the body of Christ therefore to be invisible and infinite, that it may be concealed under the bread; because they suppose it to be impossible for them to partake of him, any otherwise than by his descending into the bread: but they know nothing of that descent of which we have spoken, by which he elevates us to himself. They bring forward every plausible pretext that they can; but when they have said all, it is evident that they are contending for a local presence of Christ. And what is the reason of it? It is because they cannot conceive of any other participation of his flesh and blood, except what would consist in local conjunction and contact, or in some gross enclosure.

XVII. And to defend with obstinacy the error which they have once embraced, some of them hesitate not to affirm that the body of Christ never had any other dimensions than the whole extent of heaven and earth. His birth as an infant, his growth to maturity, his extension on the cross, his incarceration in the sepulchre; all this, they say, took place in consequence of a kind of dispensation, that he might appear to accomplish every thing necessary to our salvation. His appearance in the same corporeal form after his resurrection, his ascension to heaven, his subsequent appearances to Stephen and to Paul, all this also resulted from a similar dispensation, that he might manifest himself to the view of man as appointed King in heaven. Now what is this but to raise Marcion from the dead? For if such were the condition of Christ's body, every one must perceive it to have been a mere phantom or visionary form, without any real substance. Some plead, with a little more subtilty, than the body of Christ, which is given in the sacrament, is glorious and immortal, and that therefore



it involves no absurdity, if it be contained under the sacrament in various places, or in no place, or without any form. But I ask what kind of body did Jesus Christ give to his disciples, the night before he suffered? Do not the words imply, that he gave them the same mortal body which was just about to be betrayed? They reply, that he had already manifested his glory in the eyes of three of his disciples, on the mount. That is true, but his design was, in that splendour, to give them a transient glimpse of his immortality: they will not find there a twofold body, but the very same which Christ was accustomed to carry about with him, adorned with unusual glory, from which it speedily returned to its natural condition. When he distributed his body at the institution of the sacred supper, the hour was approaching, in which, "stricken and smitten of God," he was to lie down like a leper "without form or comeliness:" (g) he was then far from intending to display the glory of his resurrection. What a door does this open to the error of Marcion, if the body of Christ appeared in one place mortal and mean, and in another was received as immortal and glorious? On their principle, however, this happens every day; for they are constrained to confess that the body of Christ is visible in itself, while at the same time they say that it is invisibly concealed under the symbol of bread. And yet the promulgators of such monstrous absurdities are so far from being ashamed of their disgrace, that they stigmatise us with unprovoked and enormous calumnies, because we refuse to subscribe to them.

XVIII. If they are determined to fasten the body and blood of the Lord to the bread and wine, one must of necessity be severed from the other. For as the bread is presented separately from the cup, the body being united to the bread, must consequently be divided from the blood contained in the cup. For when they affirm that the body is in the bread, and the blood in the cup, while the bread and the wine are at some distance from each other, no sophistry will enable them to evade this conclusion, that the body is separated from the blood. Their usual pretence, that the blood is in the body and the body

in the blood, by what they call *concomitance*, is perfectly frivolous, while the symbols in which they are contained are so divided. But if we elevate our views and thoughts towards heaven, to seek Christ there in the glory of his kingdom, as the symbols invite us to him entire, under the symbol of bread we shall eat his body, under the symbol of wine we shall distinctly drink his blood, so that we shall thus enjoy him entire. For though he has removed his flesh from us, and in his body is ascended to heaven, yet he sits at the Father's right hand, that is, he reigns in the power, and majesty, and glory of the Father. This kingdom is neither limited to any local space, nor circumscribed by any dimensions: Christ exerts his power wherever he pleases in heaven and earth, exhibits himself present in his energetic influence, is constantly with his people, inspiring his life into them, lives in them, sustains them, strengthens and invigorates them, just as if he were corporeally present; in short, he feeds them with his own body, of which he gives them a participation by the influence of his Spirit. This is the way in which the body and blood of Christ are exhibited to us in the sacrament.

XIX. It is necessary for us to establish such a presence of Christ in the sacred supper, as neither, on the one hand, to fasten him to the element of bread, or to enclose him in it, or in any way to circumscribe him, which would derogate from his celestial glory; nor, on the other hand, to deprive him of his corporeal dimensions, or to represent his body as in different places at once, or to assign it an immensity diffused through heaven and earth, which would be clearly inconsistent with the reality of his human nature. Let us never suffer ourselves to be driven from these two exceptions: that nothing be maintained derogatory to Christ's celestial glory; which is the case when he is represented as brought under the corruptible elements of this world, or fastened to any earthly objects: and that nothing be attributed to his body incompatible with the human nature; which is the case when it is represented as infinite, or is said to be in more places than one at the same time. These absurdities being disclaimed, I readily admit whatever may serve to express the true and substantial communication of the body and blood of the Lord, which is given to the faithful

under the sacred symbols of the Supper; and to express it in a manner implying not a mere reception of it in the imagination or apprehension of their mind, but a real enjoyment of it as the food of eternal life. Nor can any cause be assigned, why this opinion is so odious to the world, and the minds of multitudes are so unjustly prejudiced against any defence of it, but that they have been awfully infatuated with the delusions of Satan. It is certain that the doctrine we advance is in all respects in perfect harmony with the Scriptures; it contains nothing absurd, ambiguous, or obscure; it is not at all inimical to true piety, or solid edification; in short, it includes nothing that can offend, except that for several ages, while the ignorance and barbarism of the sophists prevailed over the Church, this very clear light and obvious truth was shamefully suppressed. Yet as in the present age also, Satan is making the most powerful exertions to oppose it, and is employing turbulent spirits to endeavour to blacken it by every possible calumny and reproach, it is necessary to be the more diligent in asserting and defending it.

XX. Now before we proceed any further, it is requisite to discuss the institution itself; because the most plausible objection of our adversaries is, that we depart from the words of Christ. To exonerate ourselves from the false charge which they bring against us, it is highly proper, therefore, to begin with an exposition of the words. The account given by three of the evangelists, and by Paul, informs us, that "Jesus took bread, and gave thanks and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is given or broken for you. And he took the cup, and said, This cup is my blood of the new testament, or the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins." (*h*) The advocates of transubstantiation contend that the pronoun *this* denotes the appearance of the bread, because the consecration is made by the whole of the sentence, and there is no visible substance, according to them, which can be indicated by it. But if they are guided by a scrupulous attention to the words, because Christ declared that which he

(*h*) Matt. xxvi. 26—28. Mark xiv. 22—24. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 23—25.



gave into the hands of his disciples to be his body, nothing can be more at variance with a just interpretation of them, than the notion that what before was bread had now become the body of Christ. For it was that which Christ took into his hands to deliver to his disciples, that he asserts to be his body; but, “he took *bread*.” Who does not perceive, then, that that to which this pronoun referred was bread still? and therefore nothing would be more absurd than to transfer to a mere appearance or visionary form that which was spoken of real bread. Others, when they explain the word *is* to denote transubstantiation, have recourse to an interpretation still more violently perverted and unnatural. They have not the least colour, therefore, for a pretence that they are influenced by a scrupulous reverence for the words of Christ. For to use the word *is* to signify a transmutation into another substance, is a thing never heard of, in any country or in any language. Those who acknowledge the continuance of bread in the Supper, and affirm that it is accompanied with the real body of Christ, differ considerably among themselves. Those of them who express themselves more modestly, though they strenuously insist on the literal meaning of these words, “*This is my body*,” yet afterwards depart from their literal precision, and explain them to import that the body of Christ is with the bread, in the bread, and under the bread. Of the opinion maintained by them, we have already spoken, and shall soon have occasion to take further notice: at present I am only arguing respecting the words, by which they consider themselves bound, so that they cannot admit the bread to be called *his body*, because it is a sign of it. But if they object to every trope, and insist on taking the words in a sense strictly literal, why do they forsake the language of Christ, and adopt a phraseology of their own so very dissimilar? For there is a wide difference between these two assertions, that “the bread is the body,” and that “the body is with the bread.” But because they perceived the impossibility of supporting this simple proposition, “that the bread is the body,” they have endeavoured to escape from their embarrassment by those evasions. Others, more daring, hesitate not to assert, that in strict propriety of speech, the bread *is* the body; and thereby prove themselves to be advocates for a truly

literal interpretation. If it be objected, that then the bread is Christ, and Christ is God, they will deny this, because it is not expressed in the words of Christ. But they will gain nothing by their denial of it, for it is universally admitted that the whole person of Christ is offered to us in the sacrament. Now it would be intolerable blasphemy to affirm of a frail and corruptible element, without any figure, that it is Christ. I ask them whether these two propositions are equivalent to each other : *Christ is the Son of God*, and *Bread is the body of Christ*. If they confess them to be different, a confession which, if they hesitated, it would be easy to extort from them, let them say wherein the difference consists. I suppose they will adduce no other point of difference, than that the bread is called *the body* in a sacramental sense. Whence it follows, that the words of Christ are not subject to any common rule, and ought not to be examined on the principles of grammar. I would likewise inquire of the inflexible champions of a literal interpretation, whether the words attributed to Christ, by Luke and Paul, "This cup *is* the new testament in my blood," do not express the same idea as the former clause in which the bread is called his body. Surely the same reverence ought to be shewn to one part of the sacrament as to the other, and because brevity is obscure, the sense is elucidated by a fuller statement. Whenever therefore they shall argue from that one word that the bread is the body of Christ; I shall adduce the interpretation furnished by the fuller account, that it is the *testament* in his body. For shall we seek for an expositor of greater fidelity or accuracy than Paul and Luke? Nor is it my design to diminish in the smallest degree that participation of the body of Christ, which I have acknowledged is enjoyed; my only object is, to silence that foolish obstinacy which displays itself in violent contentions about words. From the authority of Paul and Luke, I understand the bread to be the body of Christ, because it is the covenant in his body. If they resist this, their contention is not with me, but with the Spirit of God. Notwithstanding they profess to be influenced by such reverence for the words of Christ, that they dare not understand an explicit declaration of his in a figurative sense, yet this pretext is not sufficient to justify their pertinacious rejection of all the

reasons which we allege to the contrary. At the same time, as I have already suggested, it is necessary to understand what is meant by "the testament in the body and blood of Christ:" because we should derive no benefit from the covenant ratified by the sacrifice of his death, if it were not followed by that secret communication by which we become one with him.

XXI. It remains for us, therefore, to acknowledge that, on account of the affinity which the things signified have with their symbols, the name of the substance has been given to the sign, in a figurative sense indeed, but by a most apt analogy. I forbear to introduce any thing of allegories and parables, lest any one should accuse me of having recourse to subterfuges and travelling out of the present subject. I observe that this is a metonymical form of expression, which is commonly used in the Scripture in reference to sacraments. For in no other sense is it possible to understand such passages as these: when of circumcision it is said, "This is my covenant:" (*i*) of the paschal lamb, "It is the Lord's passover:" (*k*) of the legal sacrifices, that they were expiations, or atonements: (*l*) of the rock, from which the water issued in the desert, "That Rock was Christ." (*m*) And not only is the name of something superior transferred to that which is inferior; but on the contrary, the name of the visible sign is likewise given to the thing signified: as when God is said to have appeared to Moses in the bush, (*n*) when the ark of the covenant is called God, (*o*) and the Holy Spirit, a dove. (*p*) For though there is an essential difference between the symbol and the thing signified, the former being corporeal, terrestrial, and visible, and the latter spiritual, celestial, and invisible; yet as the symbol is not a vain and useless memorial, a mere adumbration of the thing which it has been consecrated to represent, but also a true and real exhibition of it, why may not the name of that which it signifies be justly applied to it? If symbols invented by man, which are rather emblems of things absent, than tokens of things present, of which also they very frequently give a delusive representation,

(*i*) Gen. xvii. 10.(*k*) Exod. xii. 11.(*l*) Exod. et Lev. passim.(*m*) 1 Cor. x. 4.(*n*) Exod. iii. 2.(*o*) Psalms lxxxiv. 7. xlii. 2.(*p*) Matt. iii. 16.



are nevertheless sometimes distinguished by the names of the things which they signify: there is far greater reason why the symbols instituted by God should borrow the names of those things of which they always exhibit a correct and faithful representation, and by the truth of which they are always accompanied. So great therefore is the similitude and affinity of the one to the other, that there is nothing at all unnatural in such a mutual interchange of appellations. Let our adversaries cease then to assail us with their ridiculous wit, by calling us Tropologists, because we explain the sacramental phraseology according to the common usage of the Scripture. For as there is a great similarity in many respects between the various sacraments, so this metonymical transfer of names is common to them all. As the apostle therefore states that "the Rock" from which flowed "spiritual drink" for the Israelites, "was Christ," (*q*) because it was a visible symbol, under which "that spiritual drink" was received, though not in a manner discernible by the corporeal eye: so bread is now called the body of Christ, because it is the symbol under which the Lord truly offers us his body to eat. And that no one may despise this as a novel sentiment, we shall shew that the same was entertained by Augustine. He says; "If the sacraments had not some similitude to those things of which they are sacraments, they would be no sacraments at all. On account of this similitude, they frequently take the names even of the things which they represent. Therefore, as the sacrament of the body of Christ is in some sense that body itself, and the sacrament of the blood of Christ, is that blood itself; so the sacrament of faith is called faith." His works contain many similar passages, which it would be useless to collect, as this one is sufficient: only the reader ought to be apprised that this holy father repeats and confirms the same observation in an epistle to Euodius. It is a frivolous subterfuge to plead, that when Augustine speaks of metonymical expressions, as frequently and commonly used respecting the sacraments, he makes no mention of the Lord's Supper: for if this were admitted, we could no longer reason from the genus to the species, or from the

(*q*) 1 Cor. x. 4.

whole to a part: it would not be a good argument to say, that every animal is endued with the power of motion, therefore oxen and horses are endued with the power of motion. All further dispute on this point however is precluded by the language of the same writer on another occasion; "that Christ did not hesitate to call it his body, when he gave it as the sign of his body." Again: "It was wonderful patience in Christ, to admit Judas to the feast, in which he instituted and gave to his disciples the emblem of his body and of his blood."

XXII. But if some obstinate man, shutting his eyes against every other consideration, should insist on this single expression, "*This is my body*;" as though it made a distinction between the Supper and all other sacraments, the answer is easy. They allege that the verb substantive is too emphatical to admit of any figure. If we grant this, the verb substantive is also used by Paul, where he says, "The bread which we break, is it not the *communion* of the body of Christ?" (r) But the communion of the body is something different from the body itself. In almost all cases of sacraments, we find the same word used. "*This is my covenant*." "*It is the Lord's passover*." (s) And, to mention no more, when Paul says, "*That Rock was Christ*," (t) why do they consider the verb substantive less emphatical in that passage than in the speech of Christ? Let them also explain the force of the verb substantive in that place where John says, "*The Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified*." (u) For if they obstinately adhere to their rule, they will destroy the eternal existence of the Spirit, as if it commenced at the ascension of Christ. Let them answer, in the last place, what is the meaning of Paul, when he calls baptism "*the washing of regeneration, and renewing*," (v) which appears to be useless to many? But nothing is more conclusive against them than that passage where Paul says, that the Church is Christ. For having drawn a similitude from the human body, he adds, "*So also is Christ*:" (w) by which he means the only-begotten Son of God, not in himself, but in his members. I think I have so

(r) 1 Cor. x. 16.

(s) Gen. xvii. 10. Exod. xii. 11.

(t) 1 Cor. x. 4.

(u) John vii. 39.

(v) Titus iii. 5.

(w) 1 Cor. xii. 12.

far succeeded, that all men of sense and integrity must be disgusted with the foul calumnies of our adversaries, when they charge us with giving no credit to the words of Christ, which we receive with as much submission as themselves, and consider with greater reverence. Indeed, their stupid negligence is a proof that it is a subject of little concern to them, what was the will or meaning of Christ, provided they can use him as a shield to defend their obstinacy: as our diligence in inquiring into Christ's true meaning is a sufficient proof of our high regard to his authority. They maliciously represent, that human reason prevents us from believing what Christ himself has declared with his sacred mouth: but how unjustly they stigmatize us with this reproach, I have explained in a great measure already, and shall presently make still more evident. Nothing prevents us therefore from believing Christ when he speaks, and immediately acquiescing in every word he utters. The only question is, whether it be criminal to inquire into his genuine meaning.

XXIII. To shew themselves men of letters, these good doctors prohibit even the least departure from the literal signification. I reply, When the Scripture calls God "a man of war," because this language would be too harsh unless it be explained in a figurative sense, I hesitate not to consider it as a comparison borrowed from men. And indeed it was upon no other pretext that the ancient Anthropomorphites molested the orthodox Fathers, than by laying hold of such expressions as these: "The eyes of the Lord behold; It entereth into the ears of the Lord; His hand is stretched out; The earth is his footstool;" and accusing them of depriving God of his body, which the Scripture ascribes to him. If this canon of interpretation be admitted, all the light of faith will be overwhelmed in the crudest barbarism. For what monstrous absurdities will not fanatics be able to elicit from the Scripture, if they are permitted to allege every detached and ill-understood word and syllable in confirmation of their notions? The objection which they urge, from the improbability that Christ, when he was preparing peculiar consolation for his disciples in seasons of adversity, should express himself in enigmatical or obscure language, is completely in our favour. For if it had



not been understood by the apostles, that the bread was called his body in a figurative sense, because it was a symbol of his body, they would undoubtedly have been disturbed about so monstrous a declaration. Almost at the same moment, John states that they were embarrassed and perplexed with every minute difficulty. They who debated among themselves how Christ was to go to the Father, and were at a loss to know how he would depart from this world; who could understand nothing that was said of heavenly things, because they had not seen them: how could they have been so ready to believe any thing so entirely repugnant to every dictate of reason, as that Christ was sitting at the table before their eyes, and yet was invisibly enclosed in the bread? By eating the bread without any hesitation, they testified their consent, and hence it appears that they understood the words of Christ in the same sense that we do, considering that it is common in all sacraments for the name of the sign to be transferred to the thing signified. To the disciples therefore it was, as it is to us, a certain and clear consolation, involved in no enigma: nor is there any other cause to be assigned why some reject our interpretation, except that the devil has blinded them by his delusions, in consequence of which they imagine enigmatical obscurities, where an elegant figure furnishes such an obvious and natural meaning. Besides, if we rigidly adhere to the letter, what Christ said of the bread would be inconsistent with what he said of the cup. He calls the bread *his body*, he calls the wine *his blood*; either this must be a vain repetition, or a distinction which separates the body from the blood. It might be said of the cup, This is my body, as truly as of the bread; and the converse of this proposition would be equally correct, that the bread is his blood. If they reply, that we ought to consider for what end or use the symbols were instituted; this I acknowledge; but it is impossible to free their error from this absurd consequence, that the bread is the blood, and the wine the body. Now I am at a loss how to understand them, when they admit the bread and the body to be different things, and yet assert that the bread is properly and without any figure called the body; as if any one should say that a garment is different from a man, and yet that it is properly called a man. At the same time, as if their

victory consisted in obstinacy and calumny, they charge us with accusing Christ of falsehood, if we inquire into the true meaning of his words. Now it will be easy for the readers to judge how unjustly we are treated by these syllable-hunters, when they persuade the simple to believe, that we derogate from the authority due to the words of Christ, which we have proved to be outrageously perverted and confounded by them, but to be faithfully and accurately explained by us.

XXIV. But the infamy of this falsehood cannot be entirely effaced, without repelling another calumny: for they accuse us of being so devoted to human reason, as to limit the power of God by the order of nature, and to allow him no more than our own understanding teaches us to ascribe to him. Against such iniquitous aspersions I appeal to the doctrine which I have maintained; which will sufficiently evince that I am far from measuring this mystery by the capacity of human reason, or subjecting it to the laws of nature. Is it from natural philosophy that we have learned that Christ feeds our souls with his flesh from heaven, just as our bodies are nourished with bread and wine? Whence is it that flesh has the power of giving life to our souls? Every one will pronounce it not to be from nature. No more will it accord with human reason that the flesh of Christ descends to us to become nourishment to us. In short, whoever shall understand our doctrine, will be enraptured with admiration of the secret power of God. But these good zealots contrive a miracle, without which God himself, with all his power, disappears from their view. I would again request of my readers a diligent consideration of the nature and tendency of our doctrine, whether it depends on human reason, or on the wings of faith rises above the world and ascends to heaven. We say that Christ descends to us both by the external symbol and by his Spirit, that he may truly vivify our souls with the substance of his flesh and blood. He who perceives not that many miracles are comprehended in these few words, is more than stupid; for there is nothing more preternatural than for souls to derive spiritual and heavenly life from the flesh, which had its origin from the earth, and was subject to death: nothing is more incredible than for things separated from each other by all the distance of heaven and earth, notwithstanding

that immense local distance, to be not only connected, but united, so that our souls receive nourishment from the flesh of Christ. Let these fanatics, then, no longer attempt to render us odious by such a foul calumny, as though we, in any respect, limited the infinite power of God: which is either a most stupid mistake, or an impudent falsehood. For the question here respects not what God could do, but what he has chosen to do. We affirm that what pleased him, came to pass. It pleased him for Christ to become in all respects like his brethren, sin excepted. (x) What is the nature of our body? Has it not its proper and certain dimensions; is it not contained in some particular place, and capable of being felt and seen? And why, say they, may not God cause the same flesh to occupy many different places, to be contained in no particular place, and to have no form or dimensions? But how can they be so senseless as to require the power of God to cause a body to be a body, and not to be a body, at the same time? It is like demanding of him to cause light to be at once both light and darkness. But he wills light to be light, darkness to be darkness, and flesh to be flesh. Whenever it shall be his pleasure, indeed, he will turn darkness into light, and light into darkness: but to require that light and darkness shall no longer be different, is to aim at perverting the order of divine wisdom. Therefore body must be body, spirit must be spirit, every thing must be subject to that law, and retain that condition, which was fixed by God at its creation. And the condition of a body is such, that it must occupy one particular place, and have its proper form and dimensions. In this condition did Christ assume a body, to which, as Augustine observes, "he gave incorruption and glory, but without depriving it of its nature and reality." The testimony of the Scripture is clear; that he ascended to heaven, whence he will come again, in like manner as he was seen to ascend. (y)

XXV. They reply, that they have the word in which the will of God is clearly revealed: that is, if they be allowed to banish from the Church the gift of interpretation which elucidates the word. I confess that they have the word and quote the

(x) Heb. ii. 14. iv. 15.

(y) Acts i. 11.



letter of scripture; but just as did the Anthropomorphites in past ages, who represented God to be corporeal; just as did Marcion and the Manichæans, who attributed to Christ a celestial or visionary body. For they quoted these texts; "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." (z) "Christ made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man." (a) These groveling souls imagine that God can have no power, unless the whole order of nature be reversed by the monster which they have fabricated in their own brains: but this is an attempt to circumscribe God, and to measure his power by the fancies of men. For from what word have they learned that the body of Christ is visible in heaven, and yet is on earth, concealed in an invisible manner under innumerable pieces of bread? They will say that necessity requires this, in order to the body of Christ being given in the Supper. The truth is, that when they had determined to conclude, from the language of Christ, that his body was eaten in a carnal manner, carried away with this prejudice, they found it necessary to invent that subtilty, which the whole tenour of the Scripture contradicts. That we derogate any thing from the power of God, is so far from being true, that our doctrine peculiarly tends to magnify it. But as they never cease to accuse us of defrauding God of his due honour, by a rejection of every thing which natural reason finds it difficult to believe, though promised by the mouth of Christ himself: I repeat the answer which I have lately given, that we consult not natural reason respecting the mysteries of faith, but that, with the placid docility and gentleness of spirit recommended by James, (b) we receive the doctrine which comes down from heaven. Yet, in a point in which they run into a pernicious error, I admit that we pursue a useful moderation. On hearing the words of Christ, "This is my body," they imagine a miracle the most distant from his intention. This notion gives birth to prodigious absurdities; but, having already embarrassed themselves by their foolish precipitation, they plunge themselves into the abyss of the divine omnipo-

(z) 1 Cor. xv. 47.

(a) Phil. ii. 7.

(b) James i. 21.

tence, in order to extinguish the light of truth. Hence the fastidious presumption, with which they profess to have no wish to know how Christ is concealed under the bread, being content with that declaration, "This is my body." We, on the contrary, with equal obedience and care, endeavour to ascertain the true meaning of this passage, as we do of all others; nor do we, with preposterous eagerness, temerity, and indiscretion, seize the first thought which presents itself to our minds, but after diligent meditation we embrace that sense which the Spirit of God suggests; established in which, we look down with contempt on every opposition made to it by the wisdom of this world: we even impose restraints on our own minds, that they may not dare to utter a word of cavil, and keep them humble to prevent their murmuring against the authority of God. Hence has proceeded that exposition of the words of Christ, which all, who are but moderately versed in the Scripture, know to be agreeable to its invariable usage respecting sacraments. Nor do we esteem it unlawful, in a difficult case, after the example of the holy virgin, to inquire how it can be. (c)

XXVI. But as nothing will be more effectual to confirm the faith of true believers, than a knowledge that the doctrine which we have advanced is drawn from the pure word of God, and rests upon its authority, I will demonstrate this with all possible brevity. It is not from Aristotle, but from the Holy Spirit, that we have learned that the body of Christ, since its resurrection, is limited, and received into heaven till the last day. I am fully aware that our adversaries contemptuously elude the passages which are adduced for this purpose. (d) Whenever Christ speaks of his approaching departure from the world, they reply that this departure was nothing more than a change of his mortal state. But if this were correct, Christ would not substitute the Holy Spirit to supply the defect of his absence, as they express it, since the Spirit does not succeed to his place, nor does Christ himself descend again from the glory of heaven to assume the condition of this mortal life. The advent of the Spirit, and the ascension of Christ, are clearly

(c) Luke i. 34

(d) John xiv. 2, 3, 28

opposed to each other; and therefore it is impossible for Christ to dwell with us, according to his flesh, in the same manner in which he sends his Spirit. Besides, he expressly declares that he shall not always be with his disciples in the world. (e) This declaration also they think they have completely explained away, by saying that Christ merely intended that he should not always be poor and mean, and exposed to the necessities of this transitory life. But they are evidently contradicted by the context, which relates, not to his poverty, or indigence, or any of the miseries of this life, but to his reception of respect and honour. The unction performed by the woman displeased the disciples, because they thought it an unnecessary and useless expense, bordering on luxury; and, therefore, they wished that the value of the ointment, which they considered as improperly lavished, had been distributed to the poor. Christ said, that he should not always be present to receive such honour. Augustine has given the same explanation of this passage, in the following explicit language. "When Christ said, *Me ye have not always with you*, he spoke of the presence of his body. For according to his majesty, his providence, and his ineffable and invisible grace, is accomplished what he said on another occasion, *Lo, I am with you always*, even to the end of the world: but, with respect to the body, which the Word assumed, which was born of the virgin, which was apprehended by the Jews, which was affixed to the tree, which was taken down from the cross, which was wrapped in linen clothes, which was laid in the sepulchre, which was manifested at the resurrection, this declaration is fulfilled, *Me ye have not always with you*. Why? because in his corporeal presence he conversed with his disciples for forty days, and while they were attending him, seen, but not followed by them, he ascended to heaven. He is not here; for he sits at the right-hand of the Father; and yet he is here; for he has not withdrawn the presence of his majesty: otherwise, according to the presence of his majesty, we have Christ always with us: but, with respect to his corporeal presence, he said with truth, *Me ye have not always with you*.

(e) Matt. xxvi. 11.



For the Church had his bodily presence for a few days: now it retains him by faith, but does not behold him with corporeal eyes." Here, let us briefly remark, this father represents Christ as present with us in three respects; in his majesty, his providence, and his ineffable grace; under the last of which I comprehend the wonderful communion of his body and blood: only we must understand this to be effected by the power of the Holy Spirit, and not by a fictitious enclosure of his body under the bread. For our Lord has declared that he has flesh and bones, capable of being felt and seen: and *to go away* and *to ascend* import not a mere appearance of ascent and departure, but an actual performance of that which the words express. Shall we then, it will be said by some, assign to Christ a particular district of heaven? I reply with Augustine that this question is too curious, and altogether unnecessary: provided we believe that he is in heaven, that is enough.

XXVII. Does not the term *ascension*, which is so frequently repeated, signify a removal from one place to another? This they deny, because they consider his exaltation as only denoting the majesty of his empire. But I ask, what was the manner of his ascent? Was he not carried up on high in the view of his disciples? Do not the evangelists expressly state that he was received up into heaven? (f) These acute sophists reply that he was concealed from their sight by an interposing cloud, to teach the faithful that thenceforward he would not be visible in the world. As though, to produce a belief of his invisible presence, he ought not rather to have vanished in a moment, or to have been enveloped in the cloud without moving from where he stood. But as he was carried up into the air, and, by the interposition of a cloud between him and his disciples, shewed that he was no longer to be sought for on earth, we confidently conclude that his residence is now in heaven. This also is affirmed by Paul, who teaches us to expect him from thence. (g) For this reason the angels admonished the disciples: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." (h)

(f) Mark xvi. 19. Luke xxiv. 51. Acts i. 9.

(g) Phil. iii. 20.

(h) Acts i. 11.

Here also the adversaries of sound doctrine have recourse to what they think an ingenious evasion; that he will then become visible, who has never departed from the world, but remained invisible with his people. As though the angels in that address insinuated a twofold presence, and did not simply make the disciples ocular witnesses of his ascension with a view to preclude every doubt: just as if they had said, Received up into heaven in your sight, he has taken possession of the celestial empire: it remains for you to wait with patience till he shall come again as the judge of the world: for he is now entered into heaven, not to occupy it alone, but to assemble you and all the faithful to enjoy it with him.

XXVIII. As the advocates of this spurious doctrine are not ashamed to defend it by the suffrages of the Fathers, and particularly of Augustine, I will briefly expose the disingenuousness of this attempt. Their testimonies having been collected by learned and pious writers, I have no inclination to go over the same ground: any one who wishes may consult their writings. Nor even from Augustine shall I adduce every passage which would serve the argument; but shall content myself with shewing by a few extracts, that he is, beyond all doubt, perfectly in harmony with us. In order to deprive us of him, our adversaries allege that, in various parts of his works, he states the flesh and blood of Christ, even the victim once offered on the cross, to be dispensed in the sacred supper: but this is altogether frivolous; since he also calls the consecrated symbols either "the eucharist," or "the sacrament of Christ's body and blood." But in what sense he uses the words *flesh* and *blood*, it is unnecessary to make any long or circuitous inquiry; for he explains himself by saying "that sacraments take their names from the similitude of those things which they signify, and, therefore, that the sacrament of the body is called *the body*." With this corresponds another well-known passage; "The Lord hesitated not to say, This is my body, when he delivered the sign of it." They object again, that Augustine expressly says, that the body of Christ falls to the earth, and enters into the mouth. I reply, that he says this in the same sense in which he affirms it to be consumed; because he connects both these things together. Nor does any objec-

tion arise from his saying, that when the mystery is finished, the bread is consumed; because he had just before said, "as these things are known to man, being done by man, they may have honour as holy things, but not as miracles." And to the same effect is another expression, which our adversaries, without sufficient consideration, represent as in their favour; that "when Christ presented the mystical bread to his disciples, he, in a certain sense, held himself in his own hands." For, by introducing this qualifying phrase, *in a certain sense*, he sufficiently declares that the body of Christ was not truly or really enclosed in the bread. Nor ought this to be thought strange, for in another place he expressly maintains, "That if bodies be deprived of their local spaces, they will be no where, and consequently will cease to have any existence." It is a poor cavil, to say that this passage does not relate to the sacred supper, in which God exerts a special power: because the question had been agitated respecting the body of Christ, and this holy father, professedly answering it, says, "Christ has given immortality to his body, but has not deprived it of its nature. In a corporeal form, therefore, he is not to be considered as universally diffused: for we must beware of asserting his Divinity in such a way as to destroy the truth of his body. It does not follow, that, because God is every where, all that is in him is every where also." The reason is immediately added, "For one person is God and man, and both constitute one Christ: as God, he is every where; as man, he is in heaven." What stupidity would it have betrayed, not to except the mystery of the supper, a thing so serious and important, if it contained any thing inconsistent with the doctrine he was maintaining. Yet if any one will attentively read what follows, he will find, that under that general doctrine, the Lord's Supper is also comprehended. He says, that Christ, who is, in one person, the only-begotten Son of God and the Son of man, is every where present as God; that, as God, he resides in the temple of God, that is, in the Church; and yet that he occupies some particular place in heaven, according to the dimensions of a real body. To unite Christ with his Church, we see he does not bring down his body from heaven; which he certainly would have done,



if that body could not become our food without being enclosed under the bread. In another place, describing how Christ is now possessed by the faithful, he says, "You have him by the sign of the cross, by the sacrament of baptism, by the food and drink of the altar." Whether he is correct in placing a superstitious ceremony among the symbols of Christ's presence, I am not now discussing; but in comparing the presence of Christ to the sign of the cross, he sufficiently shews that he does not imagine Christ to have two bodies, one visibly seated in heaven, and the other invisibly concealed under the bread. If any further explication be necessary, it is soon after added, "That we always have Christ, according to the presence of his majesty; but that, according to the presence of his flesh, it is rightly said, *Me ye have not always.*" Our adversaries reply, that it is also observed at the same time, "That according to his ineffable and invisible grace, his declaration is fulfilled, *Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.*" But this is nothing in their favour, because, after all, it is restricted to that majesty which is always opposed to the body, and his flesh is expressly distinguished from his power and grace. In another passage of this author, we find the same antithesis, or contrast, "That Christ left his disciples in his corporeal presence, that he might be with them by his spiritual presence:" which clearly distinguishes the substance of the flesh from the power of the Spirit, which conjoins us with Christ, notwithstanding we are widely separated from him by local distance. He frequently uses the same mode of expression, as when he says, "Christ will come again, in his corporeal presence, to judge the living and the dead, according to the rule of faith and sound doctrine. For in his spiritual presence, he was to come to his disciples, and to be with his whole Church on earth, to the end of time. This discourse, therefore, was addressed to the believers, whom he had already begun to keep with his corporeal presence, and whom he was about to leave by his corporeal absence, that with the Father he might keep them by his spiritual presence." To explain *corporeal* to mean *visible*, is mere trifling: for he opposes the body of Christ to his divine power; and by adding, "that *with the Father he might*

keep them," clearly expresses that the Saviour communicates his grace to us from heaven by the Holy Spirit.

XXIX. As they place so much confidence in this subterfuge of an invisible presence, let us see how far it serves their cause. In the first place, they cannot produce a single syllable from the Scriptures to prove that Christ is invisible; but they take for granted, what no man of sound judgment will concede to them, that the body of Christ cannot be given in the supper, without being concealed under the form of bread. Now so far is this from being an admitted axiom, that it is the very point in dispute between them and us. And while they talk in this way, they are constrained to attribute to Christ a double body, because, upon their principle, he is visible in heaven, and at the same time, by a special dispensation, is invisible in the sacred supper. Whether this is correct or not, it is easy to judge from various passages of Scripture, and particularly from the testimony of Peter; who says of Christ, that "the heavens must receive him, until the times of restitution of all things." (i) These men maintain that he is in all places, but without any form. They object, that it is unreasonable to subject the nature of a glorified body to the laws of common nature. But this objection leads to the extravagant notion of Servetus, which justly deserves the detestation of all the faithful, that the body of Christ after his ascension was absorbed in his Divinity. I will not assert, that they hold this opinion; but if it be considered as one of the attributes of the glorified body, to fill all places in an invisible manner, it is evident that the corporeal substance must be destroyed, and no difference will be left between the Divinity and the humanity. Besides, if the body of Christ be multi-form and variable, so as to appear in one place, and to be invisible in another; what becomes of the nature of a body which consists in having its proper dimensions? and where is its unity? With far greater propriety Tertullian argues, that the body of Christ was a true and natural body, because the emblem of it is presented to us in the mystery of the supper, as a pledge and assurance of spiritual life. And, indeed, it

(i) Acts iii. 21.

was of his glorified body, that Christ said, "Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (k) We see how the truth of his body is proved by the lips of Christ himself, because it can be felt and seen: deprive it of these qualities, and it will cease to be a body. They are always recurring to their subterfuge of the dispensation which they have invented. But it is our duty to receive what Christ absolutely declares, in such a manner, as to admit, without any exception, whatever he is pleased to affirm. He proved that he was not a phantom, because he was visible in his flesh. If that be taken away which he asserts to belong to the nature of his body, will it not be necessary to frame a new definition of a body? Now, with all their sophistry, they can extract nothing to support their imaginary *dispensation* from that passage of Paul, where he says, that "From heaven we look for the Saviour, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." (l) For we cannot hope for a conformity to Christ in those qualities which they attribute to him, which would make all our bodies invisible and infinite: nor will they find a man foolish enough to be persuaded to believe so great an absurdity. Let them then no longer ascribe to the glorified body of Christ the property of being in many places at once, or of being contained within no particular space. In short, let them either deny the resurrection of the flesh, or admit that Christ, though clothed with celestial glory, has not divested himself of his flesh; for he will make us in our flesh partakers of the same glory, as we shall enjoy a resurrection similar to his. For what is there more clearly stated in any part of the Scripture, than that as Christ really assumed our flesh when he was born of the Virgin, and suffered in our flesh to atone for our sins, so he resumed the same flesh, at his resurrection, and carried it up into heaven? For all the hope that we have of our resurrection and ascension to heaven, is founded on the resurrection and ascension of Christ; who, as Tertullian says, "has taken the pledge of our resurrection into heaven with him." Now how weak and faint would this hope be, if the real flesh of

(k) Luke xxiv. 39.

(l) Phil. iii. 20, 21.



Christ had not truly risen from the dead, and entered into the kingdom of heaven ! But it is essential to a real body, to have its particular form and dimensions, and to be contained within some certain space. Let us hear no more, then, of this ridiculous notion, which fastens the minds of men, and Christ himself, to the bread. For what is the use of this invisible presence concealed under the bread, but to lead those who desire to be united to Christ, to confine their attention to that symbol ? But the Lord intended to withdraw, not only our eyes, but all our senses from the earth, when he forbade the woman to touch him, because he was not yet ascended to his Father. (*m*) When he saw Mary, with pious affection and reverence, hastening to kiss his feet, there was no reason for his disapprobation and prohibition of such an act, before his ascension to heaven, except that heaven was the only place where he chose to be sought. It is objected, that he was afterwards seen by Stephen ;(*n*) but the answer is easy : for in order to this no change of place was necessary to Christ, who could impart to the eyes of his servant a supernatural perspicacity, capable of penetrating into heaven. The same observation is applicable to his appearance to Paul. (*o*) They allege that Christ came out of the sepulchre, while the sepulchre remained closed, and entered into the room where his disciples were assembled, while the doors continued shut : but this contributes no support to their error. For as the water was like a solid pavement, forming a road for Christ when he walked on the lake ; so it is no wonder if the hardness of the stone gave way, to make him a passage : though it is more probable that the stone removed at his command, and after his departure returned to its place. And to enter while the doors remained shut, does not imply his penetrating through the solid matter, but his opening an entrance for himself by his divine power, so that, in a miraculous manner, he instantaneously stood in the midst of his disciples, though the doors were shut. What they adduce from Luke, that “ he vanished out of the sight ” of his two disciples, with whom he had walked to Emmaus, (*p*) is of no service to their cause, but is in favour of ours : for, according

(*m*) John xx. 17.(*n*) Acts vii. 55.(*o*) Acts xxii. 18. 1 Cor. xv. 8.(*p*) Luke xxiv. 31.

to the testimony of the same evangelist, when he joined these disciples, he assumed no new appearance in order to conceal himself; but “their eyes were holden, that they should not know him.” (*q*) Our adversaries, however, not only transform Christ, to keep him in the world, but they represent him as unlike himself, and altogether different on earth from what he is in heaven. By such extravagances, in short, they turn the body of Christ into a spirit, though not by positive assertion, yet by direct implication; and not content with this, they attribute to it qualities utterly incompatible with each other: whence it follows, of necessity, that he must have two bodies.

XXX. Though we should grant them what they contend for, respecting its invisible presence, still this would be no proof of its infinity, without which it will be a vain attempt to enclose Christ under the bread. Unless the body of Christ be capable of being every where at once, without any limitation of place, it will not be credible that it is concealed under the bread in the sacred supper. It was this necessity which caused them to introduce their monstrous notion of its ubiquity. But it has been shewn, by clear and strong testimonies of Scripture, that the body of Christ was, like other human bodies, circumscribed by certain dimensions: and its ascension to heaven made it evident that it was not in all places, but that it left one place, when it removed to another. Nor is the promise, “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” (*r*) to be applied, as they suppose it should be, to his body. In the first place, on this supposition, there will be no such perpetual connection, unless Christ dwells in us in a corporeal manner, without the use of the sacramental supper; and therefore they have no sufficient cause for contending so fiercely respecting the words of Christ, in order to enclose Christ under the bread. In the next place, the context evinces, that Christ there has not the most distant reference to his flesh, but promises his disciples invincible aid to sustain and defend them against all the assaults of Satan and the world. For having assigned them a difficult province, to en-

(*q*) Luke xxiv. 16.

(*r*) Matt. xxviii. 20.

courage them to undertake it without hesitation, and to discharge it with undaunted resolution, he supports them with the assurance of his presence; as though he had said, they should never want his aid, which nothing could overcome. Unless these men wished to involve every thing in confusion, ought they not to distinguish the nature of this presence? It is evident that some persons would rather incur the greatest disgrace by betraying their ignorance, than relinquish even the least particle of their error. I speak not of the Romanists, whose doctrine is more tolerable, or at least more modest: but some are so carried away with the heat of contention, as to affirm that, on account of the union of the two natures in Christ, wherever his Divinity is, his flesh, which cannot be separated from it, is there also: as if that union had mingled the two natures so as to form some intermediate kind of being, which is neither God nor man. This notion was maintained by Eutyches, and since his time by Servetus. But it is clearly ascertained from the Scriptures, that in the one person of Christ the two natures are united in such a manner, that each retains its peculiar properties undiminished. That Eutyches was justly condemned as a heretic, our adversaries will not deny; it is surprising that they overlook the cause of his condemnation, which was, that by taking away the difference between the two natures, and insisting on the unity of the person, he made the divinity human, and deified the humanity. What absurdity, therefore, is it to mingle heaven and earth together, rather than not to draw the body down from the celestial sanctuary! They endeavour to justify themselves by adducing these texts: "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven:" and, "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (s) But it argues the same stupidity to disregard the communication of properties, a term which was with good reason adopted by the holy fathers in the early ages. When Paul says that "the Lord of glory" was "crucified," (t) he certainly does not intend that Christ suffered any thing in his Divinity, but that the same

(s) John iii. 13. i. 18.

(t) 1 Cor. ii. 8.



person, who suffered as an abject and despised man, was also, as God, the Lord of glory. In the same sense, the Son of man was in heaven; because the same Christ, who, according to the flesh, dwelt on earth as the Son of man, as God, was always in heaven. For this reason, in the same passage, he represents himself as having descended from heaven, according to his Divinity; not that his Divinity quitted heaven to confine itself in the prison of the body; but because, though it filled all space, yet it dwelt corporeally, or naturally, and in a certain ineffable manner, in the humanity. It is a distinction common in the schools, and which I am not ashamed to repeat, that though Christ is every where entire, yet all that is in him is not every where. And I sincerely wish that the schoolmen themselves had duly considered the meaning of this observation; for then we should never have heard of their stupid notion of the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament. Therefore, our Mediator, as he is every where entire, is always near to his people; and in the sacred supper exhibits himself present in a peculiar manner, yet not with all that belongs to him; because, as we have stated, his body has been received into heaven, and remains there till he shall come to judgment.

XXXI. They are exceedingly deceived, who cannot conceive of any presence of the flesh, of Christ in the Supper, except it be attached to the bread. For on this principle they leave nothing to the secret operation of the Spirit, which unites us to Christ. They suppose Christ not to be present, unless, he descends to us: as though we cannot equally enjoy his presence, if he elevates us to himself. The only question between us, therefore, respects the manner of this presence: because they place Christ in the bread, and we think it unlawful for us to bring him down from heaven. Let the readers judge on which side the truth lies. Only let us hear no more of that calumny, that Christ is excluded from the sacrament, unless he be concealed under the bread. For as this is a heavenly mystery, there is no necessity to bring Christ down to the earth, in order to be united to us.

XXXII. If any one inquire of me respecting the manner, I shall not be ashamed to acknowledge, that it is a mystery:

too sublime for me to be able to express, or even to comprehend; and, to be still more explicit, I rather experience it, than understand it. Here, therefore, without any controversy, I embrace the truth of God, on which I can safely rely. He pronounces his flesh to be the food, and his blood the drink, of my soul. I offer him my soul, to be nourished with such aliment. In his sacred supper, he commands me, under the symbols of bread and wine, to take, and eat, and drink, his body and blood: I doubt not that he truly presents, and that I receive them. Only I reject the absurdities which appear to be either degrading to his majesty, or inconsistent with the reality of his human nature, and are at the same time repugnant to the word of God, which informs us that Christ has been received into the glory of the celestial kingdom, where he is exalted above every condition of the world, and is equally careful to attribute to his human nature the properties of real humanity. Nor ought this to seem incredible or unreasonable, because, as the kingdom of Christ is wholly spiritual, so his communications with his Church are not at all to be regulated by the order of the present world; or, to use the words of Augustine, "This mystery, as well as others, is celebrated by man, but in a divine manner; it is administered on earth, but in a heavenly manner." The presence of Christ's body, I say, is such as the nature of the sacrament requires; where we affirm that it appears with so much virtue and efficacy, as not only to afford our minds an undoubted confidence of eternal life, but also to give us an assurance of the resurrection and immortality of our bodies. For they are vivified by his immortal flesh, and in some degree participate his immortality. Those who go beyond this in their hyperbolical representations, merely obscure the simple and obvious truth by such intricacies. If any person be not yet satisfied, I would request him to consider, that we are now treating of a sacrament, every part of which ought to be referred to faith. Now we feed our faith by this participation of the body of Christ which we have mentioned, as fully as they do, who bring him down from heaven. At the same time, I candidly confess, that I reject that mixture of the flesh of Christ with our souls, or that transfusion of it

into us, which they teach; because it is sufficient for us that Christ inspires life into our souls from the substance of his flesh, and even infuses his own life into us, though his flesh never actually enters into us. I may also remark, that the analogy of faith; to which Paul directs us to conform every interpretation of the Scripture, is in this case, beyond all doubt, eminently in our favour. Let the adversaries of so clear a truth examine by what rule of faith they regulate themselves. "He that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God." (v) Such persons, though they may conceal it, or may not observe it, do, in effect, deny the reality of his flesh.

XXXIII. The same judgment is to be formed of our participation, which they suppose not to be enjoyed at all, unless the flesh of Christ be swallowed in the bread. But we do no small injury to the Holy Spirit, unless we believe that our communion with the flesh and blood of Christ is the effect of his incomprehensible influence. Even if the virtue of this mystery, such as we have represented it, and as it was understood by the ancient Church, had received the consideration justly due to it, for four hundred years past, there would have been quite enough to satisfy us, and the door would have been shut against many pernicious errors, which have kindled dreadful dissensions, by which the Church has been miserably agitated in the present, as well as past ages. But sophistical men insist on a hyperbolical kind of presence, which is never taught in the Scripture; and they contend as eagerly for this foolish and absurd imagination, as if the whole of religion consisted in the enclosure of Christ in the bread. It principally concerns us to know, how the body of Christ, which was once delivered for us, is made ours, and how we are made partakers of his blood which was shed; for the entire possession of Christ crucified consists in an enjoyment of all his benefits. Now, leaving these things, which are of such great importance, and even neglecting and forgetting them, these sophists take no pleasure but in this thorny question; how the



body of Christ is concealed under the bread, or under the form of the bread. They falsely pretend, that all that we teach respecting a spiritual participation, is contrary to what they call the true and real participation; because we regard nothing but the manner, which, in their opinion, is corporeal, as they enclose Christ in the bread, but in ours is spiritual, because the secret influence of the Spirit is the bond which unites us to Christ. Nor is there any more truth in their other objection, that we attend to nothing but the fruit or effect which the faithful experience from feeding on the flesh of Christ. For we have already said, that Christ himself is the matter or substance of the sacred supper; and that it is in consequence of this, that we are absolved from our sins by the sacrifice of his death, are washed in his blood, and by his resurrection are raised to the hope of the heavenly life. But the foolish imagination, of which Lombard was the author, has perverted their minds, while they have supposed the sacrament to consist in eating the flesh of Christ. For these are his words: "The sacrament, and not the thing, consists in the forms of bread and wine; the sacrament and the thing are the flesh and blood of Christ; the thing, without the sacrament, is his mystical flesh." Again, a little after: "The thing signified and contained is the proper flesh of Christ; the thing signified and not contained, is his mystical body." With his distinction between the flesh of Christ, and the power which it has to nourish, I fully agree; but his notion, that it is a sacrament, and contained, under the bread, is an error not to be endured. Hence proceeded the false idea of sacramental eating, because they supposed the body of Christ to be eaten by impious and profane persons, notwithstanding they were strangers to him. But the flesh of Christ itself, in the mystery of the Supper, is as much a spiritual thing, as our eternal salvation. Whence we conclude, that persons who are destitute of the Spirit of Christ, can no more eat the flesh of Christ, than drink wine which has no taste. It is certainly offering an insult, and doing violence to Christ, to attribute to him a body all feeble and dead, which is promiscuously distributed to unbelievers; and it is expressly contradicted by his own

words: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (x) They reply, that the discourse from which this text is quoted does not treat of sacramental eating; and this I concede to them; only let them not be perpetually striking on the same rock, that the flesh of Christ may be eaten without any benefit. But I would wish them to inform me how long they retain it after they have eaten it. Here I believe they will find it impossible to escape. But they object, that the truth of the promises of God can sustain no diminution or failure from the ingratitude of men. This I admit; and I also maintain, that the virtue of this mystery remains unimpaired, notwithstanding wicked men exert their utmost efforts to destroy it. It is one thing, however, for the body of Christ to be offered, and another for it to be received. Christ presents this spiritual meat and spiritual drink to all: some receive them with avidity, others fastidiously reject them: shall their rejection cause the meat and drink to lose their nature? They will plead, that their sentiment is supported by this similitude: that the flesh of Christ, though it be not relished by unbelievers, nevertheless still continues to be flesh. But I deny that it can ever be eaten without the taste of faith; or, if the language of Augustine be preferred, I deny that men carry away from the sacrament any more than they collect in the vessel of faith. Thus, nothing is taken from the sacrament, but its truth and efficacy remain unimpaired, notwithstanding the wicked depart empty from its external participation. If our adversaries object again, that it derogates from these words, "This is my body;" if the wicked receive corruptible bread, and nothing more, the answer is easy: That God will have his veracity discovered, not in the reception itself, but in the constancy of his goodness, since he is ready to impart to the unworthy, and even liberally offers to them, that which they reject. And this is the perfection of the sacrament, which the whole world cannot violate, that the flesh and blood of Christ, are as truly given to the unworthy, as to the elect and faithful people of God: but it is likewise true, that as rain falling upon a

(x) John vi. 56.

hard rock runs off from it without penetrating into the stone, thus the wicked, by their obduracy, repel the grace of God, so that it does not enter into their hearts. Besides, a reception of Christ without faith, is as great an absurdity, as for seed to germinate in the fire. Their inquiry, how Christ came for condemnation to some, unless they receive him unworthily, is a groundless cavil; for we nowhere read that the perdition of man is owing to an unworthy reception of Christ, but rather to a rejection of him. Nor can they derive any assistance from the parable in which Christ speaks of some seed springing up among thorns, and being afterwards choked and destroyed; for he is there shewing what value belongs to that temporary faith, which our adversaries suppose to be unnecessary to a participation of the flesh and blood of Christ, placing Judas, in this respect, on an equality with Peter. Their error is rather refuted by another part of the same parable, in which Christ speaks of some seed as having fallen by the way-side, and some on stony ground, neither of which took any root. (*y*) Whence it follows, that the obduracy of unbelievers is such an obstacle, that Christ does not reach them. Whoever desires our salvation to be promoted by this mystery, will find nothing more proper than that the faithful, conducted to the fountain, should derive life from the Son of God. But the dignity of it is sufficiently magnified, when we remember, that it is a medium by which we are incorporated into Christ; or by which, after our incorporation into him, the connection is more and more strengthened, till he perfectly unites us with himself, in the heavenly life. They object, that Paul ought not to have made unbelievers “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,” (*z*) unless they had been partakers of them. But I answer, that they are not condemned for having eaten and drunk his body and blood, but only for having profaned the mystery, by trampling under foot the pledge of our holy union with God, which ought to have been received by them with reverence.

XXXIV. Now because Augustine is the principal among the ancient fathers who has asserted this point of doctrine, that

(*y*) Matt. xiii. 4—7.

(*z*) 1 Cor. xi 27.



the sacraments sustain no diminution, and that the grace which they represent is not frustrated by the unbelief or wickedness of men, it will be useful to adduce his own words, which will clearly prove that those who expose the body of Christ to be eaten by dogs, (a) are chargeable with an injudicious and culpable perversion of his meaning, in applying it to the present argument. Sacramental eating, according to them, is that by which the wicked receive the body and blood of Christ without any influence of his Spirit, or any effect of his grace. Augustine, on the contrary, carefully examining these words, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life," (b) says: "This is the virtue of the sacrament, not the mere visible sacrament: and that internally, not externally; he who eateth with his heart, and not with his teeth:" from which he concludes that the sacrament of the union which we have with the body and blood of Christ is presented in the sacred Supper, to some to life, to others to perdition; but that the thing signified by the sacrament is only given to life to all who partake of it, and in no case to perdition. To preclude any cavil here, that the thing signified is not the body, but the grace of the Spirit, which may be separated from the body, he obviates such misrepresentations by the use of the contrasted epithets of *visible* and *invisible*: for the body of Christ cannot be comprehended under the former. Hence it follows, that unbelievers receive nothing but the visible symbol. And, for the more complete removal of every doubt, after having said that this bread requires the hunger of the inner man, he adds, "Moses, and Aaron, and Phinehas, and many others who ate the manna, were acceptable to God. Why? Because they spiritually understood the visible food, they spiritually hungered, they spiritually ate, that they might be spiritually satisfied. For we also in the present day have received visible food: but the sacrament is one thing, and the virtue of the sacrament is another." A little after he says; "Therefore he who abideth not in Christ, and in whom Christ doth not abide, spiritually neither eateth his flesh nor drinketh his blood, though he may carnally and visibly press the sign of the body

(a) Matt. vii. 6.

(b) John vi. 54.

and blood with his teeth." Here again we find the visible sign opposed to the spiritual eating: which contradicts that error, that the invisible body of Christ is really eaten sacramentally, though it be not eaten spiritually. We are informed also that nothing is granted to the profane and impure, beyond the visible reception of the sign. Hence that well-known observation of his, that the other disciples ate *the bread which was the Lord*, but that Judas merely ate *the Lord's bread*: by which he clearly excludes unbelievers from the participation of the body and blood. And to the same purpose is what he says in another place; "Why do you wonder if the bread of Christ was given to Judas to enslave him to the devil, when you see, on the other hand, that the messenger of Satan was given to Paul to make him perfect in Christ?" (*b*) He says, indeed, in another place, "That the sacramental bread was the body of Christ to those to whom Paul said, He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself: (*c*) and that they could not, therefore, be affirmed to have received nothing, because they had received amiss." But his meaning is more fully explained in another passage. For professedly undertaking to describe how the body of Christ is eaten by the wicked and profligate, who confess the Christian faith with their lips while they deny it in their actions, and that in opposition to the opinion of some who supposed them to eat not only the sacramental symbol but the substance itself, he says, "They must not be considered as eating the body of Christ, because they are not to be numbered among the members of Christ. For, to mention nothing else, they cannot, at the same time, be the members of Christ and the members of a harlot. And where the Lord himself says, He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him; (*d*) he shews what it is to eat his body, not merely in a sacramental way, but in truth; for this is to dwell in Christ, that Christ may dwell in us. This is the same as if he had said, Whosoever dwelleth not in me and in whom I dwell not, let him not say or think he eateth my body or drinketh my blood." Let the readers consider the opposition here stated between eating *merely in a sacramental way* and *in truth*, and there will

(*b*) 2 Cor. xii. 7.(*c*) 1 Cor. xi. 29.(*d*) John vi. 56.

remain no doubt respecting his meaning. He confirms the same with equal perspicuity in the following passage: "Prepare not your jaws, but your heart: it is for this that the Supper is enjoined. Behold, we believe in Christ when we receive him by faith: in receiving him, we know what we think: we take a bit of bread, and our hearts are satisfied. We are fed, therefore, not by what we see, but by what we believe." Here, also, what the wicked partake of, he restricts to the visible sign; and pronounces that Christ is only received by faith. So, in another place, he expressly remarks that the good and the wicked partake of the elements in common, and excludes the latter from the true participation of the body of Christ. For, if they had enjoyed the substance itself, he would not have been entirely silent on that which would have strengthened his argument. In another place also, treating of the eating, and the benefit of it, he concludes thus: "Then will the body and blood of Christ be life to every one, if that which is visibly received in the sacrament, be, in the truth which is signified, spiritually eaten and spiritually drunk." Let those, therefore, who, in order to agree with Augustine, make unbelievers partakers of the flesh and blood of Christ, exhibit to us the body of Christ in a visible manner, since he pronounces the whole truth of the sacrament to be spiritual. And the evident conclusion from his language is, that the sacramental eating is nothing more than eating the visible and external sign, when unbelief precludes the entrance of the substance. If the body of Christ could be eaten truly, without being eaten spiritually, what could be the meaning of Augustine, when he said: "You are not to eat this body which you see, and to drink the blood which will be shed by those who shall crucify me. I have appointed a sacrament for you; spiritually understood, it shall vivify you." He certainly did not mean to deny that the same body which Christ offered in sacrifice is exhibited in the Supper; but he designates the mode of participating in it; that though it has been received into celestial glory, it inspires us with life by the secret influence of the Holy Spirit. I acknowledge that he frequently speaks of the body of Christ as eaten by unbelievers, but he explains his meaning by adding that it is done sacramentally; and, in



another place, he describes the spiritual eating as not consisting in a corporeal swallowing of the grace of God. And that my adversaries may not charge me with a wish to overwhelm them by an accumulation of passages, I would request them to inform me how they can evade that one declaration of his, where he says, "that the sacraments realize what they represent in the elect alone." Surely they will not dare to deny that the bread represents the body of Christ. Hence it follows, that the reprobate are excluded from the participation of it. The following passage of Cyril also shews him to have been of the same opinion. "As when any one pours melted wax upon other wax, the whole will be mingled together into one mass: so it is necessary to any person's reception of the body and blood of Christ, for him to be united with Christ, so that Christ may be found in him, and he in Christ." What has been said, I think, sufficiently proves, that those who eat the body of Christ merely in a sacramental way are deprived of the true and real participation of it, as the body itself cannot be separated from its efficacious power: and yet that this is no impeachment of the truth of the promises of God, who still continues to send us rain from heaven, though rocks and stones imbibe none of the moisture.

XXXV. This knowledge will also easily dissuade us from the carnal adoration which has been introduced into the sacrament by the perverse temerity of some, who reasoned in this manner; If the body be there, consequently the soul and the divinity are there together with the body, for they cannot be separated from it: therefore Christ ought to be adored there. In the first place, what will they do, if we refuse to admit what they call *concomitance*? For, however they may urge the absurdity of separating the soul and the divinity from the body, what man in his senses can be persuaded that the body of Christ is Christ? They consider it indeed as fully demonstrated by their arguments. But as Christ speaks distinctly of his body and blood, without specifying the nature of the presence, how can they establish what they wish by that which is itself doubtful? What then? If their consciences happen to be exercised with any peculiar affliction, will they not, with all their syllogisms, be confounded and overwhelmed;

when they shall perceive themselves to be destitute of the certain word of God, which furnishes the only support for our souls when they are called to give an account, and without which they sink in a moment; when they shall reflect that the doctrine and examples of the apostles are against them, and that they are themselves the sole authors of their error? To such reflections will be added other sentiments of compunction, and those by no means inconsiderable. What! was it a thing of no consequence to adore God in this form, without any such thing being enjoined upon us? In a case where the true worship of God was concerned, ought that to have been so lightly undertaken, which not a word in the scripture could be found to sanction? But if with becoming humility they had kept all their thoughts in subjection to the word of God, they would certainly have listened to what Christ said, "Take, eat, drink," and would have obeyed this command, which enjoins the sacrament to be taken, not to be adored. Those who, as the Lord has commanded, receive it without adoration, are assured that they do not deviate from the divine command: and such an assurance is the best satisfaction we can have in any thing in which we engage. They have the example of the apostles, of whom we read, not that they prostrated themselves in adoration, but that as they were sitting at the table they took, and did eat. They have the practice of the apostolic Church, in which Luke states that the communion of the faithful consisted, not in adoration, but in "the breaking of bread." (e) They have the apostolic doctrine with which Paul instructed the church of the Corinthians, accompanying it with this declaration; "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." (f)

XXXVI. All these things lead the pious reader to consider how unsafe it is, in matters of such importance, to leave the pure word of God for the reveries of our own brains. The remarks which have already been made, ought to relieve our minds from every difficulty on this subject. For, in order to a due reception of Christ in the sacrament, it is necessary for pious souls to be elevated to heaven. If it be the design of the

(e) Acts ii. 42.

(f) 1 Cor. xi. 23.

sacrament to assist the mind of man, which is otherwise weak, that it may be enabled to rise to discover the sublimity of spiritual mysteries; those who confine themselves to the external sign, wander from the right way of seeking Christ. What, then, shall we deny it to be a superstitious worship, when men prostrate themselves before a piece of bread, to adore Christ in it? There is no doubt that the council of Nice intended to guard against this evil, when it prohibited Christians from having their attention humbly fixed on the visible signs. And this was the only reason for that custom in the ancient Church, that before the consecration one of the deacons should, with an audible voice, admonish the people to have their *hearts above*. The Scripture itself, also, in addition to the particular account which it gives us of the ascension of Christ, by which he removed his corporeal presence from the view and society of men; in order to divest us of every carnal idea respecting him, whenever it mentions him, calls us to lift our minds upwards, and to seek for him seated “at the right hand of God.” (g) According to this rule, it was our duty to adore him spiritually in the glory of heaven, rather than to invent such a dangerous kind of adoration, involving such gross and carnal conceptions of God. Wherefore, those who have invented the adoration of the sacrament, have not only dreamed it of themselves, without the sanction of the Scripture, in which not the least mention of it can be found, though, if it had been agreeable to God, it would not have been omitted; but even in direct opposition to the Scripture, forsaking the living God, they have fabricated a new deity according to their own wayward inclinations. For what is idolatry, if it be not to worship the gifts instead of the giver himself? In which they have fallen into a double sin: for the honour has been taken away from God, to be transferred to the creature: and God himself has also been dishonoured by the pollution and profanation of his gift, when his holy sacrament has been made an execrable idol. Let us, on the contrary, lest we fall into the same danger, fix our ears, our eyes, our minds, and our tongues entirely on the sacred doctrine of God. For that is the school of the Holy Spirit,

(g) Col. iii. 1.



the best of all teachers ; whose instructions require nothing to be added from any other quarter, and omit nothing of which we ought not to be willing to remain in ignorance.

XXXVII. Now, as superstition, when it has once gone beyond the proper limits, proceeds in sinning without end, they have wandered still further : they have invented ceremonies altogether incompatible with the institution of the sacred supper, for the sole purpose of giving divine honours to the sign. When we remonstrate with them, they reply that they pay this veneration to Christ. In the first place, if this were done in the Supper, I would still say that that is the only legitimate adoration, which terminates not in the sign, but is directed to Christ enthroned in heaven. Now what pretence have they for alleging that they worship Christ in the bread, when they have no promise of such a thing? They consecrate their *host*, as they call it, to carry it about in procession, to display it in pomp, and to exhibit it in a box, to be seen, adored, and invoked by the people. I inquire how they consider it to be rightly consecrated. They immediately adduce these words ; “ This is my body.” I object, that it was said at the same time, “ Take and eat.” And I have sufficient reason for this ; for when a promise is annexed to a precept, it is so included in the precept, that separated from it, it ceases to be a promise at all. This shall be further elucidated by a similar example. The Lord gave a command, when he said, “ Call upon me ;” he added a promise, “ I will deliver thee.” (*h*) If any one should invoke Peter or Paul and boast of this promise, will not his conduct be universally condemned? And wherein would this differ from the conduct of those who suppress the command to eat, and lay hold of the mutilated promise, “ This is my body,” in order to misapply it to ceremonies foreign from the institution of Christ? Let us remember, then, that this promise is given to those who observe the commandment connected with it, but that they are entirely unsupported by the word of God, who transfer the sacrament to any other usage. We have already shewn how the mystery of the Supper promotes our faith before God. But as God here not only recalls to our remembrance

(*h*) Psalm I. 15.

the vast exuberance of his goodness, but delivers it, as it were, into our hands, as we have already declared, and excites us to acknowledge it; so he also admonishes us not to be ungrateful for such a profusion of beneficence, but, on the contrary, to magnify it with the praises it deserves, and to celebrate it with thanksgivings. Therefore, when he gave the institution of this sacrament to the apostles, he said to them, “This do in remembrance of me;” (*i*) which Paul explains to be “shewing the Lord’s death:” (*k*) that is, publicly and all together, as with one mouth, to confess that all our confidence of life and salvation rests on the death of the Lord; that we may glorify him by our confession, and by our example may exhort others to give him the same glory. Here, again, we see the object to which the sacrament tends, which is to exercise us in a remembrance of the death of Christ. For the command which we have received, to “shew the Lord’s death till he come” to judgment, is no other than to declare, by the confession of our lips, what our faith has acknowledged in the sacrament, that the death of Christ is our life. This is the second use of the sacrament, which relates to external confession.

XXXVIII. In the third place, the Lord intended it to serve us as an exhortation, and no other could be better adapted to animate and influence us in the most powerful manner to purity and sanctity of life, as well as to charity, peace, and concord. For there the Lord communicates his body to us in such a manner that he becomes completely one with us, and we become one with him. Now as he has only one body, of which he makes us all partakers, it follows, of necessity, that, by such participation, we also are all made one body; and this union is represented by the bread which is exhibited in the sacrament. For as it is composed of many grains, mixed together in such a manner that one cannot be separated or distinguished from another; in the same manner we ought, likewise, to be connected and united together, by such an agreement of minds, as to admit of no dissension or division between us. This I prefer expressing in the language of Paul: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the

(*i*) Luke xxii. 19.

(*k*) 1 Cor. xi. 26.

communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”(1) We have derived considerable benefit from the sacrament, if this thought be impressed and engraven upon our minds, that it is impossible for us to wound, despise, reject, injure, or in any way to offend one of our brethren, but we, at the same time, wound, despise, reject, injure, and offend Christ in him; that we have no discord with our brethren without being, at the same time, at variance with Christ; that we cannot love Christ without loving him in our brethren; that such care as we take of our own body, we ought to exercise the same care of our brethren, who are members of our body; that as no part of our body can be in any pain without every other part feeling correspondent sensations, so we ought not to suffer our brother to be afflicted with any calamity without our sympathising in the same. Wherefore, it is not without reason that Augustine so frequently calls this sacrament “the bond of charity.” For what more powerful stimulus could be employed to excite mutual charity among us, than when Christ, giving himself to us, not only invites us by his example mutually to devote ourselves to the promotion of one another’s welfare, but also by making himself common to all, makes us all to be one with himself.

XXXIX. This furnishes the best confirmation of what I have stated before, that there is no true administration of the sacrament without the word. For whatever advantage accrues to us from the sacred supper requires the word: whether we are to be confirmed in faith, exercised in confession, or excited to duty, there is need of preaching. Nothing more preposterous, therefore, can be done with respect to the Supper, than to convert it into a mute action, as we have seen done under the tyranny of the pope. For they have maintained that all the validity of the consecration depended on the intention of the priests, as if it had nothing to do with the people, to whom the mystery ought principally to be explained. They fell into this error, for want of observing that those promises on which the

(1) 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.



consecration rests, are not directed to the elements themselves, but to the persons who receive them. Christ does not address the bread, to command it to become his body; but enjoins his disciples to eat, and promises them the communication of his body and blood. Nor does Paul teach any other order than that the promises should be offered to the faithful, together with the bread and the cup. And this is the truth. We are not to imagine any magical incantation, or think it sufficient to have muttered over the words, as if they were heard by the elements: but we are to understand those words, by which the elements are consecrated, to be a lively preaching, which edifies the hearers, which penetrates their minds, which is deeply impressed upon their hearts, which exerts its efficacy in the accomplishment of that which it promises. These considerations clearly shew that the reservation of the sacrament, insisted upon by many persons, for the purpose of extraordinary distribution to the sick, is perfectly useless. For either they will receive it without any recital of the institution of Christ, or they will accompany the sign with a true explication of the mystery. If nothing be said, it is an abuse and corruption. If the promises are repeated and the mystery declared, that those who are about to receive it may communicate with advantage, we have no reason to doubt that this is the true consecration. What end will be answered then by the former consecration, which, having been pronounced when the sick persons were not present, is of no avail to them? But it will be alleged, that those who adopt this practice have the example of the ancient Church in their favour. This I confess: but in a matter of such great importance, and in which any error must be highly dangerous, there is nothing so safe as to follow the truth itself.

XL. Now as we perceive this sacred bread of the Lord's supper to be spiritual food, grateful and delicious as well as salutary to the sincere worshippers of God, who in the participation of it experience Christ to be their life, whom it stimulates to thanksgiving, whom it exhorts to mutual charity among themselves: so on the contrary it is changed into a most noxious poison to all whose faith it does not nourish and confirm, and whom it does not excite to thanksgiving and charity. For as corporeal food, when it offends a diseased stomach, be-

coming itself corrupted, is found rather noxious than nutritious: so this spiritual food, when it meets with a soul polluted by iniquity, only precipitates it into a more dreadful ruin; not indeed from any fault in the food, because “unto them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure,” (*l*) however it may be otherwise sanctified by the blessing of the Lord. For as Paul says, “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” (*m*) Persons of this description, who without one particle of faith, or the least feeling of charity, intrude themselves like so many swine to seize the Supper of the Lord, have no discernment of the Lord’s body. For as they do not believe that body to be their life, they treat it with the utmost dishonour they are capable of casting upon it, robbing it of its dignity, and receiving it in such a manner as to pollute and profane it. And as amidst their dissension and alienation from their brethren, they presume to mingle the sacred symbol of Christ’s body with their discords, it is not owing to them that the body of Christ is not divided, and every member severed from the rest. Therefore they are justly represented as guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, which they so shamefully pollute with their sacrilegious impiety. By this unworthy eating they receive their own condemnation. For though they have no faith fixed on Christ, yet in their reception of the sacrament they profess that there is no salvation for them any where except in him, and renounce every other dependence. Wherefore they are their own accusers, they give testimony against themselves, they seal their own condemnation. Moreover, while divided and distracted from their brethren, that is, from the members of Christ, they have no part in Christ, yet they testify that the only way of salvation is to participate of Christ, and to be united to him. For this reason, Paul gave the following injunction: “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;” (*n*) by which, I apprehend, he meant that every man should retire

(*l*) Titus i. 15.(*m*) 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29.(*n*) 1 Cor. xi. 28.

into himself, and consider whether with sincere confidence of heart he relies on the salvation procured by Christ; whether he acknowledges it by the confession of his mouth; whether he aspires after an imitation of Christ in the pursuit of integrity and holiness; whether, after the example of Christ, he is ready to devote himself to his brethren, and to communicate himself to them with whom he has a common interest in Christ; whether as he himself is acknowledged by Christ, he in like manner considers all his brethren as members of his body; whether he desires to cherish, preserve, and assist them as his own members. Not that these duties of faith and charity can now be perfect in us; but because this is the point which we ought to feel the most ardent desires, and exert the most strenuous efforts to attain, that our faith may be more and more increased, and our charity strengthened from day to day.

XLI. In general, when they have intended to prepare persons for this worthy participation of the sacrament, they have dreadfully harassed and tortured miserable consciences, and yet have not mentioned a single thing which the case required. They have said that those "eat worthily," who are in a state of grace. To be in a state of grace, they have explained to consist in being pure and cleansed from all sin: a doctrine which would exclude all the men who now live, or ever have lived upon earth, from the benefit of this sacrament. For if it be necessary for us to derive our worthiness from ourselves, we are undone; nothing awaits us but ruin, confusion, and despair. Though we strive with all our powers, we shall gain nothing at last, but a discovery that we are most unworthy, after having laboured to the utmost to find some worthiness. To heal this wound, they have contrived a method of attaining worthiness; which is, that having, as far as we can, examined our consciences, and required from ourselves an account of all our actions, we should purge ourselves from our unworthiness by contrition, confession, and satisfaction: but what kind of purgation this is, we have already stated in a place more suitable to the discussion of it. As far as relates to the present subject, I observe that these consolations are too poor and un-



substantial for consciences disturbed, distressed, dejected, and overwhelmed with a sense of their sins. For if the Lord by his express interdiction admits none to a participation of the Supper, but those who are righteous and innocent, it requires no little care in any individual to attain an assurance of his possession of that righteousness, which he finds to be required by God. Now what ground of assurance have we, that God is satisfied with persons who have done what they could? And even if this were the case, when shall any man be found who can venture to declare that he has done all that he could? Thus while no certain assurance of our worthiness can be obtained, the entrance to the sacrament will always remain closed by that dreadful interdiction, which denounces that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."

XLII. Now it is easy to judge what kind of doctrine this is which prevails in the papacy, and from what author it has proceeded; which by its extreme austerity deprives and robs miserable sinners, who are already afflicted with trepidation and sorrow, of the consolation of this sacrament, where all the comforts of the gospel were set before them. It was certainly impossible for the devil to take a more compendious method of ruining men, than by infatuating them in such a manner as to deprive them of all taste and relish for such food which their heavenly and most merciful Father had intended for their nourishment. That we may not precipitate ourselves into this abyss, therefore, let us remember that this sacred banquet is medicine to the sick, comfort to the sinner, alms to the poor; but that it would confer no advantage on the healthy, the righteous, and the rich, if any such could be found. For as Christ is given to us in it for food, we understand, that without him we pine, starve, and faint, as the body loses its vigour from want of sustenance. Moreover, as he is given to us for life, we understand that without him we are utterly dead in ourselves. Wherefore the best and only worthiness that we can present to God, is to offer him our vileness and unworthiness, that he may make us worthy of his mercy; to despair in ourselves, that we may find consolation in him; to humble ourselves, that we may be exalted by him; to accuse ourselves,

that we may be justified by him ; likewise to aspire to that unity which he enjoins upon us in his Supper ; and as he makes us all to be one in himself, so it should be our desire that we may all have one mind, one heart, and one tongue. If we have these things well considered and digested in our minds, though we may be disturbed, we shall never be subverted by such reflections as this : Needy and destitute of every good, defiled with the pollution of sin, and half dead, how could we worthily eat the Lord's body ? We shall rather consider, that we come as paupers to the liberal Benefactor, as patients to the Physician, as sinners to the Author of righteousness, as persons dead to the Fountain of life ; that the worthiness which is required by God consists principally in faith, which attributes every thing to Christ, and places no dependence on ourselves, and, secondly, in charity, even that charity which it is enough for us to present to God in an imperfect state, that he may increase and improve it ; for we cannot produce it in a state of perfection. Others, who have agreed with us that the worthiness which is enjoined consists in faith and charity, have nevertheless fallen into a considerable error respecting the degree of that worthiness, requiring a perfection of faith to which nothing can ever approach, and a charity equal to that which Christ has manifested toward us. But by this requisition they exclude all men from access to this sacred supper, as much as the persons to whom we adverted before. For if their opinion were admitted, no person could receive it, but unworthily ; since all without a single exception would be convinced of their imperfection. And surely it must betray extreme ignorance, not to say stupidity, to require in the reception of the sacrament, that perfection which would render the sacrament unnecessary and useless ; for it was not instituted for the perfect, but for the imperfect and feeble, to awaken, excite, stimulate, and exercise their graces of faith and charity, and to correct the defects of both.

XLIII. With respect to the external ceremonial, whether the faithful take the bread in their hands or not ; whether they divide it between them, or every individual eat that which is given to him ; whether they return the cup into the hand of the deacon, or deliver it to the person who is next ; whether

the bread be leavened or unleavened; whether the wine be red or white; is not of the least importance. These things are indifferent, and left to the liberty of the Church. It is certain however that the custom of the ancient Church was that every one should take the bread into his hand. And Christ said, "Divide it among yourselves." (o) History informs us, that leavened and common bread was used before the time of Alexander, bishop of Rome, who was the first advocate for unleavened bread; but for what reason I know not, unless it was to dazzle the eyes of the people with admiration of a new spectacle, rather than to instruct their minds in pure religion. I appeal to all who feel the least concern for piety, whether they do not clearly perceive, how much more conspicuously the glory of God appears in this use of the sacrament, and how much greater abundance of spiritual consolation and delight the faithful enjoy in it, than in those insignificant and theatrical fooleries which only tend to deceive the minds of the gazing multitude. This they call keeping the people in religion, when they lead them into any thing they please, under the stupefaction and infatuation of superstition. If any one be inclined to defend such inventions by the plea of antiquity, I am equally aware how early chrism and exorcism were used in baptism, and how soon after the age of the apostles, corruptions were introduced into the Lord's Supper: but this is the confidence of human presumption, which can never restrain itself from trifling with the mysteries of God. But let us remember, that God holds the obedience of his word in such high estimation, that it is the standard by which he appoints us to judge even his angels and the whole world. Now leaving all this mass of ceremonies, let us remark, that the Lord's Supper might be most properly administered, if it were set before the Church very frequently, and at least once in every week in the following manner. The service should commence with public prayer; in the next place, a sermon should be delivered; then, the bread and wine being placed upon the table, the minister should recite the institution of the Supper, should declare the promises which are left to us in it, and at the same time should

(o) Luke xxii. 17.



excommunicate all those who are excluded from it by the prohibition of the Lord; after this, prayer should be offered, that with the same benignity with which our Lord has given us this sacred food, he would also teach and enable us to receive it in faith and gratitude of heart, and that, as of ourselves we are not worthy, he would in his mercy make us worthy of such a feast; then either some psalms should be sung, or a portion of Scripture should be read, and the faithful in a becoming order should participate of the sacred banquet, the ministers breaking the bread and distributing it, and presenting the cup, to the people: after the conclusion of the Supper, an exhortation should be given to sincere faith, and a confession of the same; to charity, and a deportment worthy of Christians: finally, thanksgivings should be rendered, and praises sung to God: and to close the whole, the Church should be dismissed in peace.

XLIV. The observations which we have already made respecting the sacrament, abundantly shew that it was not instituted for the purpose of being received once in a year, and that in a careless and formal manner, as is now the general practice; but in order to be frequently celebrated by all Christians, that they might often call to mind the sufferings of Christ; the recollection of which would sustain and strengthen their faith, would incite them to sing praises to God, and to confess and celebrate his goodness, and would also cherish in their hearts, and promote the mutual exercise of that charity, the bond of which they would see in the unity of the body of Christ. For whenever we communicate in the symbols of the Lord's body, it is like the interchange of a mutual pledge, by which we reciprocally bind ourselves to all the duties of charity, that no one among us will do any thing by which he may injure his brother, or will omit any thing by which he can assist him, when necessity requires and opportunity admits. That such was the practice of the apostolic Church, is mentioned by Luke, when he says that "the faithful continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (*p*) The invariable custom

therefore was, that no assembly of the Church should be held without the word being preached, prayers being offered, the Lord's Supper administered, and alms given. That this was the order established among the Corinthians, may be fairly concluded from the Epistles of Paul; and it is well known to have been followed for many ages after. For hence those ancient canons, which are attributed to Anacletus and Calixtus, "that after the consecration is finished, all shall communicate, on pain of expulsion from the Church." And the ancient canons which are ascribed to the apostles, say, "that those who continue not to the end, and receive not the sacrament, ought to be corrected as disturbers of the Church." In the council of Antioch also it was decreed, that those who enter into the Church, hear the sermon, and retire from the communion, be excluded from the Church till they shall have corrected this fault. And though in the first council of Toledo this decree was either mitigated, or at least enacted in a milder form, yet there also it was ordained, that those who shall be found never to communicate after having heard the sermon, be admonished; and that if they obey not the first admonition, they be excommunicated.

XLV. These decrees were evidently passed by the holy Fathers with a view to retain and perpetuate the frequent celebration of the communion, which had been transmitted by the apostles themselves, and which they perceived to be highly beneficial to the faithful, but by negligence to be gradually falling into general disuse. Augustine testifies respecting the age in which he lived, when he says, "The sacrament of this thing, that is, of the unity of the body and blood of Christ, is prepared on the table of the Lord, in some places daily, in other places on appointed days, at stated intervals of time; and is thence received, by some to life, by others to destruction." And in his first epistle to Januarius; "Some receive the body and blood of the Lord every day, and others receive them on certain days: in some churches not a day passes without the administration of the sacraments; in others it is administered only on Saturday and Sunday; and in others only on Sunday." But the people in general being, as we have observed, sometimes too remiss, the holy Fathers stimulated them

with severe reproofs, that they might not appear to connive at such negligence. Of this we have an example in a homily of Chrysostom, on the Epistle to the Ephesians: "To him who dishonoured the feast, it is not said, Wherefore didst thou sit down? but, How camest thou in hither? (q) Whoever is present here and is not a partaker of the mysteries, is wicked and impudent. I appeal to you, if any one be invited to a feast, and come, wash his hands, sit down, and apparently make every preparation for partaking of it, and after all taste nothing, will he not offer an insult both to the feast and to him who has provided it? So you, who appear among them who by prayer prepare themselves to receive the sacred food, who by the very circumstance of not departing, confess yourself to be one of their number, and after all do not participate with them, would it not have been better for you not to have made your appearance among them? You will tell me, you are unworthy. Neither then were you worthy of the communion of prayer, which is a preparation for the reception of the holy mystery."

XLVI. Augustine and Ambrose unite in condemning the practice which in their time had already been adopted in the Eastern Churches, for the people to attend as spectators of the celebration of the sacrament, and not to partake of it. And that custom, which enjoins the faithful to communicate only once a year, is unquestionably an invention of the devil, whoever were the persons by whom it was introduced. It is said that Zepherinus, bishop of Rome, was the author of that decree; which there is not the least reason for believing to have been such as is now represented. It is probable that the regulation which he made was not ill calculated for the interest of the Church under the circumstances of those times. For there is no doubt that the sacred supper was then set before the faithful whenever they assembled for worship; nor is there any more doubt that the principal part of them used to communicate: but as it would scarcely ever happen that all could communicate together, and it was necessary that those who were mixed with unbelievers and idolaters, should testify their faith

(q) Matt. xxii. 12.



by some external sign; that holy man, for the sake of order and discipline, appointed that day for all the Christians at Rome to make a public confession of their faith by a participation of the Lord's supper. The regulation of Zepherinus was good in itself, but was grossly perverted by his successors, when they made a certain law that there should be one communion in a year; the consequence of which has been, that almost all men, when they have communicated once, resign themselves to lethargic repose, as if they had fairly excused themselves for all the rest of the year. A very different practice ought to have been pursued. At least once in every week the table of the Lord ought to have been spread before each congregation of Christians, and the promises to have been declared for their spiritual nourishment; no person ought to have been compelled to partake, but all ought to have been exhorted and stimulated, and those who were negligent, to have been re-proved. Then all, like persons famished, would have assembled in crowds to such a banquet. I have sufficient reason for complaining that it was the artifice of the devil that introduced this custom, which, by prescribing one day in a year, renders men slothful and careless all the rest of the time. We see that this abuse had already begun to prevail in the time of Chrysostom, but we see at the same time how greatly it displeased him. For in the place which I have just quoted, he severely complains of a great inequality in this matter, that oftentimes people would not come to the sacrament all the rest of the year, notwithstanding they were prepared, but that they would come at Easter even without preparation. Then he exclaims: "O custom! O presumption! In vain then is the daily oblation; in vain do we stand at the altar. There is no one to partake with us." So far is such a practice from being sanctioned by the authority of Chrysostom.

XLVII. From the same source proceeded another regulation, which has robbed or deprived the principal part of the people of God of one half of the sacred supper; I mean, the symbol of the blood, which has been interdicted to the laity and the profane, for by these titles they distinguish the Lord's heritage, and has become the peculiar privilege of the few who have received ecclesiastical unction and tonsure. The ordi-

nance of the eternal God is, "Drink ye all of it;" which man has repealed and abrogated by a new and contrary law, ordaining that all shall not drink of it. And these legislators, that they may not appear to resist their God without reason, plead the dangers which might result if this sacred cup were indiscriminately presented to all; as though those dangers had not been foreseen and considered by the eternal wisdom of God. In the next place, they argue with great subtilty, that one is sufficient for both. For, if it be the body, they say, it is the whole of Christ, who cannot now be separated from his body. The body, therefore, contains the blood. See how human reason is at variance with God, when it has once been left to its own vagaries. Exhibiting the bread, our Lord says, "This is my body;" exhibiting the cup, he says, "This is my blood." The audacity of human reason contradicts this, and affirms that the bread is the blood, and that the wine is the body; as if the Lord had distinguished his body from his blood, both by words and by signs, without any cause, and as if it had ever been heard that the body or blood of Christ was called God and man. Certainly, if he had intended to designate his whole person, he might have said "It is I," as the Scripture tells us he did on other occasions: and not, "This is my body; this is my blood." But, with a view to aid the weakness of our faith, he exhibits the bread and the cup separately, to teach us that he is sufficient for drink as well as for food. Now, let one of these parts be taken away, and we shall find only half of our nourishment in him. Though it were true, then, as they pretend, that the blood is in the bread, and the body in the cup, yet they defraud the souls of the faithful of that confirmation which Christ has delivered as necessary for them. Therefore, leaving their subtilties, let us hold fast the benefit which arises from the double pledge which Christ has ordained.

XLVIII. I am aware of the cavils advanced on this subject by the ministers of Satan, who are accustomed to treat the Scripture with contempt. In the first place, they plead, that a simple act affords no sufficient ground from which to deduce a rule of perpetual obligation on the observance of the Church. But it is false to call it a simple act; for Christ not only gave

the cup to his apostles, but also commanded them to do the same in time to come. For it is the language of command, "Drink ye all of it." And Paul mentions its having been practised in such a way as fully implies its being a positive ordinance. The second subterfuge is, that Christ admitted none but the apostles to a participation of this Supper, whom he had already chosen and admitted into the order of sacrificing priests. But I would wish them to give me answers to five questions, from which they will not be able to escape, but their misrepresentations will be easily refuted. First; By what oracle have they obtained this solution, so inconsistent with the word of God? The Scripture mentions twelve who sat down with Jesus; but it does not obscure the dignity of Christ so as to call them sacrificing priests; a name which I shall notice in the proper place. Though he then gave the sacrament to the twelve, yet he commanded that they should do the same; that is, that they should distribute it among them in a similar manner. Secondly; why, in that purer period, for almost a thousand years after the apostles, were all, without exception, admitted to the participation of both symbols? Was the ancient church ignorant what guests Christ had admitted to his supper? Any hesitation or evasion would betray the most consummate impudence. Ecclesiastical histories and works of the Fathers are still extant, which furnish clear testimonies of this fact. Tertullian says; "The flesh is fed with the body and blood of Christ, that the soul may be nourished by God." Ambrose said to Theodosius; "With such hands how will you receive the sacred body of the Lord? With what audacity will you drink his sacred blood?" Jerome says; "The priests consecrate the eucharist, and distribute the Lord's blood to the people." Chrysostom says; "It is not as it was under the ancient law, when the priest ate one part, and the people another; but to all is presented one body, and one cup. Every thing in the eucharist is common to the priest and to the people." And the same is attested in various places by Augustine.

XLIX. But why do I dispute about a thing that is so evident? Let any one read all the Greek and Latin Fathers, and he will find them abound with such testimonies. Nor did this



custom fall into disuse while a particle of purity remained in the Church. Gregory, who may be justly called the last bishop of Rome, shews that it was observed in his time. He says: "You have now learned what the blood of the Lamb is, not by hearing, but by drinking. His blood is drunk by the faithful." And it even continued for four hundred years after his death, notwithstanding the universal degeneracy which had taken place. Nor was it considered merely as a custom but as an inviolable law. For the divine institution was then revered, and no doubt was entertained of the criminality of separating things which the Lord had united. For Gelasius, bishop of Rome, speaks in the following manner; "We have understood that some, only receiving the Lord's body, abstain from the cup: who, as they appear to be enslaved by an unaccountable superstition, should, without doubt, either receive the sacrament entire, or entirely abstain from it. For no division of this mystery can be made without great sacrilege." Attention was paid to those reasons of Cyprian, which surely ought to be sufficient to influence a christian mind. He says: "How do we teach or stimulate them to shed their blood in the confession of Christ, if we refuse his blood to them who are about to engage in the conflict? Or how do we prepare them for the cup of martyrdom, if we do not first admit them, by the right of communion, to drink the cup of the Lord in the Church?" The canonists restrict the decree of Gelasius to the priests, but this is too puerile a cavil to need any refutation.

L. Thirdly; why did Christ, when he presented the bread, simply say, "Take, eat;" but when he presented the cup, "Drink ye *all* of it;" as if he expressly intended to guard against the subtilty of Satan? Fourthly; If, as our adversaries pretend, our Lord admitted to his supper none but sacrificing priests, what man can be found so presumptuous as to invite to a participation of it strangers whom the Lord has excluded? and to a participation of that gift over which they could have no power, without any command from him who alone could give it? And with what confidence do they now take upon them to distribute to the people the symbol of the body of Christ, if they have neither the command nor example of the Lord? Fifthly; Did Paul affirm what was false,

when he said to the Corinthians, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you?"<sup>(r)</sup> For he afterwards declares what he had delivered, which was, that all, without any distinction, should communicate in both symbols. If Paul had "received of the Lord," that all were to be admitted without any distinction; let them consider from whom they have received, who exclude almost all the people of God: for they cannot now pretend their doctrine to have originated from God, with whom is "not yea and nay."<sup>(s)</sup> And yet they dare to shelter such abominations under the name of the Church, and to defend them under that pretext; as if the Church could consist of those antichrists, who so easily trample under foot, mutilate and abolish the doctrine and institutions of Christ; or as if the apostolic Church, in which true religion displayed all its influence, were not the true Church.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

*The Pupal Mass not only a sacrilegious Profanation of the Lord's Supper, but a total Annihilation of it.*

WITH these, and similar inventions, Satan has endeavoured to obscure, corrupt, and adulterate the sacred supper of Christ, that, at least, its purity might not be preserved in the Church. But the perfection of the dreadful abomination was his establishment of a sign, by which it might be not only obscured and perverted, but altogether obliterated and abolished, so as to disappear from the view, and to depart from the remembrance of men. I refer to that most pestilent error, with which he has blinded almost the whole world, persuading it to believe that the mass is a sacrifice and oblation to procure the remission of sins. How this dogma was at first understood by the sounder schoolmen, who did not fall into all the absurdities of their successors, I shall not stay to inquire, but shall take leave of them and their thorny subtilties; which, however

(r) 1 Cor. xi. 23.

(s) 2 Cor. i. 18.

they may be defended by subterfuges and cavils, ought to be rejected by all good men, because they merely serve to obscure the lustre of the sacred supper. Leaving them, therefore, I wish the readers to understand that I am now combating that opinion, with which the Roman antichrist and his agents have infected the whole world; namely, that the mass is an act by which the priest who offers Christ, and others who participate in the oblation, merit the favour of God; or that it is an expiatory victim, by which they reconcile God to them. Nor has this been merely an opinion generally received by the multitude; but the act itself is so ordered, as to be a kind of expiation, to make satisfaction to God for the sins of the living and the dead. This is fully expressed also in the words which they use; nor can any thing else be concluded from its daily observance. I know how deeply this pest has stricken its roots, what a plausible appearance of goodness it assumes, how it shelters itself under the name of Christ, and how multitudes believe the whole substance of faith to be comprehended under the single word *mass*. But when it shall have been most clearly demonstrated by the word of God, that this mass, however it may be varnished and adorned, offers the greatest insult to Christ, suppresses and conceals his cross, consigns his death to oblivion, deprives us of the benefit resulting from it, and invalidates and destroys the sacrament which was left as a memorial of that death; will there be any roots too deep for this most powerful axe, I mean, the word of God, to cut in pieces and eradicate; will there be any varnish too specious for this light to detect the evil which lurks behind it?

II. Let us proceed, therefore, to establish what we have asserted; in the first place, that the mass offers an intolerable blasphemy and insult to Christ. For he was constituted by his Father a priest and a high-priest, not for a limited time, like those who are recorded to have been consecrated priests under the old testament, who, having a mortal life, could not have an immortal priesthood; wherefore, there was need of successors, from time to time, to fill the places of those who died: but Christ, who is immortal, requires no vicar to be substituted in his place. Therefore he was designated by the Father as “a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec;”



that he might for ever execute a permanent priesthood. This mystery had long before been prefigured in Melchisedec, whom the Scripture has introduced once as "the priest of the Most High God," but never mentions him afterwards, as if there had been no end to his life. From this resemblance Christ is called a priest after his order. (*t*) Now, those who sacrifice every day must necessarily appoint priests to conduct the oblations, and those priests must be substituted in the room of Christ, as his successors and vicars. By this substitution they not only despoil Christ of his due honour, and rob him of the prerogative of an eternal priesthood, but endeavour to degrade him from the right hand of the Father, where he cannot sit in the enjoyment of immortality, unless he also remain an eternal priest. Nor let them plead that their sacrificing priests are not substituted in the place of Christ, as though he were dead, but are merely assistants in his eternal priesthood, which does not, on this account, cease to remain: for the language of the apostle is too precise for them to avail themselves of such an evasion; when he says that "they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." (*u*) Christ, therefore, whose continuance is not prevented by death, is only one, and needs no companions. Yet they have the effrontery to arm themselves with the example of Melchisedec in defence of their impiety. For, because he is said to have "brought forth bread and wine," they conclude this to have been a prefiguration of their mass, as though the resemblance between him and Christ consisted in the oblation of bread and wine: which is too unsubstantial and frivolous to need any refutation. Melchisedec gave bread and wine to Abraham and his companions, to refresh them when they were fatigued on their return from battle. What has this to do with a sacrifice? Moses praises the humanity and liberality of the pious king: these men presumptuously fabricate a mystery, of which the Scripture makes no mention. Yet they varnish their error with another pretext, because the historian immediately afterwards says, "and he was the priest of the Most High God." I answer, that they mis-

(*t*) Gen. xiv. 18. Psalm cx. 4. Heb. v. 5, 6, 10. vii. 17, 21, 23, 24. ix. 11. x. 21.

(*u*) Heb. vii. 23.

apply to the bread and wine what the apostle refers to the benediction. "For this Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham, and blessed him:" from which the same apostle, than whom it is unnecessary to seek for a better expositor, argues his superior dignity; "for without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." (x) But, if the offering of Melchisedec had been a figure of the sacrifice of the mass, is it credible that the apostle, who discusses all the minutest circumstances, would have forgotten a thing of such high importance. It will be in vain for them, with all their sophistry, to attempt to overturn the argument which the apostle himself adduces, that the right and dignity of priesthood ceases among mortal men, because Christ, who is immortal, is the alone and perpetual priest.

III. A second property of the mass we have stated to be, that it suppresses and conceals the cross and passion of Christ. It is beyond all contradiction, that the cross of Christ is subverted as soon as ever an altar is erected: for if Christ offered up himself a sacrifice on the cross, to sanctify us for ever, and to obtain eternal redemption for us, the virtue and efficacy of that sacrifice must certainly continue without any end. (y) Otherwise, we should have no more honourable ideas of Christ, than of the animal victims which were sacrificed under the law, the oblations of which are proved to have been weak and inefficacious, by the circumstance of their frequent repetition. Wherefore, it must be acknowledged, either that the sacrifice which Christ accomplished on the cross wanted the virtue of eternal purification, or that Christ has offered up one perfect sacrifice, once for all ages. This is what the apostle says, that this great high priest, even Christ, "now once, in the end of the world, hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Again: "By the will of God we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." Again: "That by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." To which he subjoins this remarkable observation: "That where remission of iniquities is, there is no more offering for sin." (z) This

(x) Heb. vii. 1, 7.

(y) Heb. vii. 27, x. 10, 14, ix. 12.

(z) Heb. ix. 26, x. 10, xiv. 18.

was likewise signified by the last words of Christ, when, with his expiring breath, he said, "It is finished." (a) We are accustomed to consider the last words of dying persons as oracular. Christ, at the moment of his death, declared that, by his own sacrifice, every thing necessary to our salvation had been accomplished and finished. To such a sacrifice, the perfection of which he so explicitly declares, shall it be lawful for us to make innumerable additions every day, as though it were imperfect? While God's most holy word not only affirms, but proclaims and protests, that this sacrifice was once perfect, and that its virtue is eternal; do not they who require another sacrifice charge this with imperfection and inefficacy? But what is the tendency of the mass, which admits of a hundred thousand sacrifices being offered every day, except it be to obscure and suppress the passion of Christ, by which he offered himself as the alone sacrifice to the Father? Who, that is not blind, does not see, that such an opposition to the clear and manifest truth must have arisen from the audacity of Satan? I am aware of the fallacies with which that father of falsehood is accustomed to varnish over this fraud; as, that these are not various or different sacrifices, but only a repetition of that one sacrifice. But such illusions are easily dissipated. For, through the whole argument, the apostle is contending, not only that there are no other sacrifices, but that that one sacrifice was offered once, and is never to be repeated. The more artful sophisters have recourse to a deeper subterfuge; that the mass is not a repetition of that sacrifice, but an application of it. This sophistry also may be confuted, without any more difficulty than the former. For Christ once offered up himself, not that his sacrifice might be daily ratified by new oblations, but that the benefit of it might be communicated to us by the preaching of the gospel, and the administration of the sacred supper. Thus, Paul says, that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," and commands us to feast on him. (b) This, I say, is the way in which the sacrifice of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is rightly applied to us, when it is commu-

(a) John xix. 30.

(b) 1 Cor. v. 7, 8,



nicated to us for our enjoyment, and we receive it with true faith.

IV. But it is worth while to hear on what other foundation they rest the sacrifice of the mass. They apply to this purpose the prophecy of Malachi, in which our Lord promises, that "from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, incense shall be offered unto" his "name, and a pure offering." (c) As though it were a new or unusual thing for the prophets, when they speak of the calling of the Gentiles, to designate the spiritual worship of God, to which they exhort them, by the external ceremonies of the law; in order to shew, in a more familiar manner, to the men of their own times, that the Gentiles were to be introduced to a participation of the true religion: as it is their invariable practice, on all occasions, to describe the realities which have been exhibited in the gospel, under the types and figures of the dispensation under which they lived. Thus, conversion to the Lord, they express by going up to Jerusalem; adoration of God, by oblations of various gifts; the more extensive knowledge to be bestowed on the faithful, in the kingdom of Christ, by dreams and visions. (d) The prophecy which they adduce, therefore, is similar to another prediction of Isaiah, where he foretels the erection of three altars, in Assyria, Egypt, and Judea. (e) I ask the Romanists, first, whether they do not admit this prediction to have been accomplished in the kingdom of Christ: secondly, where are these altars, or when were they ever erected: thirdly, whether they think that those two kingdoms were destined to have their respective temples, like that at Jerusalem. A due consideration of these things, I think, will induce them to acknowledge, that the prophet, under types adapted to his own time, was predicting the spiritual worship of God, which was to be propagated all over the world. This is our solution of the passage which they adduce from Malachi; but as examples of this mode of expression are of such frequent occurrence, I shall not employ myself in a further enumeration of them. Here, also, they are miserably deceived, in acknowledging no sacrifice but that

(c) Mal. i. 11.

(d) Isaiah xix. 23. Joel ii. 23.

(e) Isaiah xix. 19, 23, 24.

of the mass; whereas, the faithful do in reality now sacrifice to the Lord, and offer a pure oblation, of which we shall presently treat.

V. I now proceed to the third view of the mass, under which I am to shew how it obliterates and expunges from the memory of mankind the true and alone death of Jesus Christ. For as among men the confirmation of a testament depends on the death of the testator, so also our Lord, by his death, has confirmed the testament in which he has given us remission of sins, and everlasting righteousness. Those who dare to attempt any variation or innovation in this testament, thereby deny his death, and represent it as of no value. Now, what is the mass, but a new, and totally different testament? For does not every separate mass promise a new remission of sins, and a new acquisition of righteousness; so that there are now as many testaments as masses? Let Christ, therefore, come again, and by another death ratify this new testament, or rather, by innumerable deaths, confirm these innumerable testaments of masses. Have I not truly said, then, at the beginning, that the true and alone death of Christ is obliterated and consigned to oblivion by the masses? And is not the direct tendency of the mass, to cause Christ, if it were possible, to be put to death again? “For where a testament is,” says the apostle, “there must also, of necessity, be the death of the testator.” (f) The mass pretends to exhibit a new testament of Christ; therefore it requires his death. Moreover, the victim which is offered must, of necessity, be slain and immolated. If Christ be sacrificed in every mass, he must be cruelly murdered in a thousand separate places at once. This is not *my* argument: it is the reasoning of the apostle: “It was not necessary that he should offer himself often; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world.” (g) In reply to this, I confess, they are ready to charge us with calumny; alleging, that we impute to them sentiments which they never have held, nor ever can hold. We know, indeed, that the life and death of Christ are not in their power; and whether they intend to murder

(f) Heb. ix. 16.

(g) Heb. ix. 23, 25, 26.

him, we do not inquire: we only mean to shew the absurdities which follow from their impious and abominable doctrine, and this we have proved from the mouth of the apostle. They may reply a hundred times, if they please, that this sacrifice is without blood; but I shall deny that sacrifices can change their nature, at the caprice of men: for thus the sacred and inviolable institution of God would fall to the ground. Hence it follows, that this principle of the apostle can never be shaken, that “without shedding of blood is no remission.” (*h*)

VI. We are now to treat of the fourth property of the mass, which is, to prevent us from perceiving and reflecting on the death of Christ, and thereby to deprive us of the benefit resulting from it. For who can consider himself as redeemed by the death of Christ, when he sees a new redemption in the mass? Who can be assured that his sins are remitted, when he sees another remission? It is not a sufficient answer, to say, that we obtain remission of sins in the mass, only because it has been already procured by the death of Christ. For this is no other than pretending that Christ has redeemed us in order that we may redeem ourselves. For this is the doctrine which has been disseminated by the ministers of Satan, and which they now defend by clamours and fire and sword; that when we offer up Christ to his Father, in the sacrifice of the mass, we, by that act of oblation, obtain remission of sins, and become partakers of the passion of Christ. What remains then to the passion of Christ, but to be an example of redemption, by which we may learn to be our own redeemers? Christ, himself, when he seals the assurance of pardon in the sacred Supper, does not command his disciples to rest in this act, but refers them to the sacrifice of his death; signifying, that the supper is a monument, or memorial, appointed to teach us that the expiatory victim by which God was to be appeased ought to be offered but once. Nor is it sufficient to know that Christ is the sole victim, unless we also know that there is only one oblation, so that our faith may be fixed upon his cross.

(*h*) Heb. ix. 22.



VII. I come now to the concluding observation; that the sacred supper, in which our Lord had left us the memorial of his passion impressed and engraven, has, by the erection of the mass, been removed, abolished, and destroyed. For the Supper itself is a gift of God, which ought to be received with thanksgiving. The sacrifice of the mass is pretended to be a price given to God, and received by him as a satisfaction. As far as *giving* differs from *receiving*, so far does the sacrifice of the mass differ from the sacrament of the Supper. And this is the most miserable ingratitude of man, that where the profusion of the divine goodness ought to have been acknowledged with thanksgivings, there he makes God his debtor. The sacrament promised, that by the death of Christ we are not only restored to life, but are perpetually vivified, because every part of our salvation was then accomplished. The sacrifice of the mass proclaims a very different doctrine; that it is necessary for Christ to be sacrificed every day, in order to be of any advantage to us. - The Supper ought to be distributed in the public congregation of the Church, to instruct us in the communion by which we are all connected together in Christ Jesus. The sacrifice of the mass dissolves and destroys this communion. For the reception of this error rendered it necessary that there should be priests to sacrifice for the people; and the Supper, as if it had been resigned to them, ceased to be administered to the Church of the faithful, according to the commandment of the Lord. A way was opened for the admission of private masses, which represented a kind of excommunication, rather than that communion which had been instituted by our Lord, when the mass-priest separates himself from the whole congregation of the faithful, to devour his sacrifice alone. That no person may be deceived, I call it a private mass, wherever there is no participation of the Lord's Supper among the faithful, whatever number of persons may be present as spectators of it.

VIII. With respect to the word *mass* itself, I have never been able certainly to determine whence it originated: only I think it may probably have been derived from the oblations which used to be made at the sacrament. Hence the ancient

Fathers generally use it in the plural number. But to forbear all controversy respecting the term, I say that private masses are diametrically repugnant to the institution of Christ, and are consequently an impious profanation of the sacred supper. For what has the Lord commanded us? Is it not, to take and divide it among us? *(k)* What observance of the command does Paul inculcate? Is it not the breaking of the bread, which is the communion of the body of Christ? *(l)* When one man takes it, therefore, without any distribution, what resemblance does this bear to the command? But it is alleged, that this one man does it in the name of the whole Church. I ask, by what authority? Is not this an open mockery of God, when one person does separately, by himself, that which ought not to have been done but among many? The words of Christ, and of Paul, are sufficiently clear to authorise the conclusion, that wherever there is no breaking of the bread for common distribution among the faithful, there is not the supper of the Lord, but a false and preposterous imitation of it. But a false imitation is a corruption; and the corruption of so great a mystery cannot take place without impiety. Private masses, therefore, are an impious abuse. And as one abuse in religion soon produces another, after the introduction of this custom of offering without communicating, they began by degrees to have innumerable masses in all the corners of the temples, and thus to divide the people from each other, who ought to have united in one assembly, to celebrate the mystery of their union. Now let the Romanists deny, if they can, that they are guilty of idolatry in exhibiting bread in their masses, to be worshipped instead of Christ. In vain do they boast of those promises of the presence of Christ; for however they may be understood, they certainly were not given in order that impure and profane men, whenever they please, and for whatever improper use, may transmute bread into the body of Christ; but in order that the faithful, religiously observing the command of Christ, in celebrating the Supper, may enjoy a true participation of him in it.

*(k)* Luke xxii. 17.*(l)* 1 Cor. x. 16.

IX. In the purer times of the Church, this corruption was unknown. For however the more impudent of our adversaries endeavour to misrepresent this matter, yet it is beyond all doubt that all antiquity is against them, as we have already evinced in other points, and may be more fully determined by a diligent perusal of the ancient fathers. But before I conclude this subject, I will ask our advocates for masses, since they know that “the Lord hath” not “as great delight in sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord,” and that “to obey is better than sacrifice;” (*m*) how they can believe this kind of sacrificing to be acceptable to God, for which they have no command, and which they do not find to be sanctioned by a single syllable of the Scripture? Moreover, since they hear the apostle say, that “no man taketh” the name and “honour” of the priesthood “unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron,” and that even “Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest,” but obeyed the call of his Father; (*n*) either they must prove God to be the author and institutor of their priesthood, or they must confess the honour not to be of God, into which they have presumptuously and wickedly obtruded themselves, without any call. But they cannot produce a tittle which affords the least support to their priesthood. What then will become of their sacrifices, since no sacrifices can be offered without a priest?

X. If any one should bring forward mutilated passages, extracted from different parts of the writings of the Fathers, and contend, on their authority, that the sacrifice which is offered in the Supper ought to be understood in a different manner from the representation we have given of it, he shall receive the following brief reply. If the question relate to an approbation of this notion of a sacrifice which the Papists have invented in the mass, the ancient Fathers are very far from countenancing such a sacrilege. They do indeed use the word *sacrifice*, but they at the same time fully declare, that they mean nothing more than the commemoration of that true and only sacrifice which Christ, whom they invariably speak of as our only priest, completed on the cross. Au-

(*m*) 1 Sam. xv. 22.(*n*) Heb. v. 4, 5.



gustine says: "The Hebrews, in the animal victims which they offered to God, celebrated the prophecy of the future victim which Christ has since offered: Christians, by the holy oblation and participation of the body of Christ, celebrate the remembrance of the sacrifice which is already completed." Here he evidently inculcates the same sentiment that is expressed more at large in the Treatise, which has been attributed to him, though it is doubtful who was the author, on Faith, addressed to Peter the Deacon; in which we find the following passage: "Hold this most firmly, and admit not the least doubt, that the only-begotten Son of God himself, being made flesh for us, hath offered himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, animals were sacrificed in the time of the Old Testament; and to whom now, with the Father and the Holy Spirit (with whom he has one and the same divinity), the holy Church, throughout the world, ceases not to offer the sacrifice of bread and wine. For in those carnal victims there was a prefiguration of the flesh of Christ, which he himself was to offer for our sins, and of his blood, which he was to shed for the remission of our sins. But in the present sacrifice, there is a thanksgiving and commemoration of the flesh of Christ, which he has offered, and of his blood, which he has shed for us." Hence Augustine himself, in various passages, explains it to be nothing more than a sacrifice of praise. And it is a remark often found in his writings, that the Lord's Supper is called a sacrifice, for no other reason than because it is a memorial, image, and attestation, of that singular, true, and only sacrifice, by which Christ has redeemed us. There is also a remarkable passage in his Treatise on the Trinity, where, after having treated of the only sacrifice, he thus concludes: "In a sacrifice, four things are to be considered, to whom it is offered, by whom it is offered, what is offered, and for whom it is offered. The alone and true Mediator, by a sacrifice of peace, reconciling us to God, remains one with him to whom he has offered it; makes them for whom he has offered it one in himself; is the one who alone has offered it; and is himself the oblation which he has offered." Chrysostom also speaks

to the same purpose. And they ascribe the honour of the priesthood so exclusively to Christ, that Augustine declares, that if any one should set up a bishop as an intercessor between God and man, it would be the language of Antichrist.

XI. Yet we do not deny that the oblation of Christ is there exhibited to us in such a manner, that the view of his cross is almost placed before our eyes; as the apostle says, that by the preaching of the cross to the Galatians, "Christ had been evidently set forth before their eyes, crucified among them." (o) But as I perceive that those ancient Fathers misapplied this memorial to a purpose inconsistent with the institution of the Lord, because the Supper, as celebrated by them, represented I know not what appearance of a reiterated, or at least renewed oblation; the safest way for pious minds, will be to acquiesce in the pure and simple ordinance of the Lord, whose Supper this sacrament is called, because it ought to be regulated by his sole authority. Finding them to have retained orthodox and pious sentiments of this whole mystery, and not detecting them of having intended the least derogation from the one and alone sacrifice of Christ, I dare not condemn them for impiety; yet I think it impossible to exculpate them from having committed some error in the external form. For they imitated the Jewish mode of sacrificing, more than Christ had commanded, or the nature of the gospel admitted. The censure which they have deserved, therefore, is for this preposterous conformity to the Old Testament; that, not content with the simple and genuine institution of Christ, they have symbolized too much with the shadows of the law.

XII. If any person will attentively examine, he will observe this distinction clearly marked by the word of the Lord, between the Mosaic sacrifices and our eucharist; that though those sacrifices represented to the Jewish people the same efficacy of the death of Christ which is now exhibited to us in the Lord's Supper, that the mode of representation was different. For the Jewish priests were commanded to prefigure the sacrifice which was to be accomplished by Christ: a victim was presented in the place of Christ himself; there

(o) Gal. iii. 1.

was an altar on which it was to be immolated; in short, every thing was conducted in such a manner as to set before the eyes of the people a representation of the sacrifice which was to be offered to God as an atonement for sins. But since that sacrifice has been accomplished, the Lord hath prescribed to us a different method, in order to communicate to the faithful the benefit of the sacrifice which has been offered to him by his Son. Therefore he hath given us a table at which we are to feast, not an altar upon which any victim is to be offered: he hath not consecrated priests to offer sacrifices, but ministers to distribute the sacred banquet. In proportion to the superior sublimity and sanctity of the mystery, with the greater care and reverence it ought to be treated. The safest course therefore is to relinquish all the presumption of human reason, and to adhere strictly to what the Scripture enjoins. And surely, if we consider that it is the supper of the Lord, and not of men, there is no cause why we should suffer ourselves to be moved a hair's-breadth from the scriptural rule by any authority of men or prescription of years. Therefore when the apostle was desirous of purifying it from all the faults which had already crept into the Church at Corinth, he adopted the best and readiest method, by recalling it to the one original institution, which he shews ought to be regarded as its perpetual rule.

XIII. That no wrangler may take occasion to oppose us from the terms *sacrifice* and *priest*, I will briefly state what I have meant by these terms all through this argument. Some extend the word *sacrifice* to all religious ceremonies and actions; but for this I see no reason. We know that, by the constant usage of the Scripture, the word *sacrifice* is applied to what the Greeks call sometimes *θυσια*, sometimes *προσφορα*, and sometimes *τελετη*, which taken generally comprehends whatever is offered to God. Wherefore it is necessary for us to make a distinction, but such a distinction as may be consistent with the sacrifices of the Mosaic law; under the shadows of which the Lord designed to represent to his people all the truth of spiritual sacrifices. Though there were various kinds of them, yet they may all be referred to two classes. For either they were oblations made for sin in a way of satisfaction, by which guilt was expiated before God; or they were symbols



of divine worship and attestations of devotion. The second class comprehended three kinds of sacrifices: some were offered in a way of supplication, to implore the favour of God; some in a way of thanksgiving, to testify the gratitude of the mind for benefits received; and some as simple expressions of piety, to renew the confirmation of the covenant: to this class belonged burnt-offerings and drink-offerings, first-fruits and peace-offerings. Therefore let *us* also divide sacrifices into two kinds, and for the sake of distinction call one the *sacrifice of worship and piety*, because it consists in the veneration and service of God, which he demands and receives from the faithful; or it may be called, if you prefer it, the *sacrifice of thanksgiving*; for it is presented to God by none but persons who, loaded with his immense benefits, devote themselves and all their actions to him in return. The other may be called the *sacrifice of propitiation or expiation*. A sacrifice of expiation is that which is offered to appease the wrath of God, to satisfy his justice, and thereby to purify and cleanse from sins, that the sinner, defecated from the defilement of iniquity, and restored to the purity of righteousness, may be re-admitted to the favour of God. This was the designation, under the law, of those victims which were offered for the expiation of sins; not that they were sufficient to effect the restoration of the favour of God or the obliteration of iniquity, but because they prefigured that true sacrifice which at length was actually accomplished by Christ alone: by him alone, because it could be made by no other; and once for all, because the virtue and efficacy of that one sacrifice is eternal; as Christ himself declared, when he said, “It is finished:” (*p*) that is to say, whatever was necessary to reconcile us to the Father, and to obtain remission of sins, righteousness, and salvation, was all effected and completed by that one oblation of himself, which was so perfect as to leave no room for any other sacrifice afterwards.

XIV. Wherefore I conclude, that it is a most criminal insult, and intolerable blasphemy, both against Christ himself, and against the sacrifice which he completed on our behalf by

his death upon the cross, for any man to repeat any oblation with a view to procure the pardon of sins, propitiate God, and obtain righteousness. But what is the object of the mass, except it be that by the merit of a new oblation we may be made partakers of the passion of Christ? And that there might be no limits to their folly, they have not been satisfied with affirming it to be a common sacrifice offered equally for the whole Church, without adding, that it was in their power to make a peculiar application of it to any individual they chose, or rather to every one who was willing to purchase such a commodity with ready money. Though they could not reach the price of Judas, yet to exemplify some characteristic of their author, they have retained the resemblance of number. Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver; these men, as far as in them lies, sell him, in French money, for thirty pieces of copper: Judas sold him but once; they sell him as often as they meet with a purchaser. In this sense, we deny that they are priests; that they can intercede with God on behalf of the people by such an oblation; that they can appease the wrath of God, or obtain the remission of sins. For Christ is the sole Priest and High Priest of the New Testament, to whom all the ancient priesthoods have been transferred, and in whom they are all terminated and closed. And even if the Scripture had made no mention of the eternal priesthood of Christ, yet as God, since the abrogation of the former priesthoods, has instituted no other, the argument of the apostle is irrefragable, that "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God." (q) With what effrontery then do these sacrilegious mortals, who boast of being the executioners of Christ, dare to call themselves priests of the living God!

XV. There is a beautiful passage in Plato, in which he treats of the ancient expiations among the heathens, and ridicules the foolish confidence of wicked and profligate men, who thought that such disguises would conceal their crimes from the view of their gods, and, as if they had made a compromise with their gods, indulged themselves in their vices with the greater security. This passage almost seems as if it had been

(q) Heb. v. 4.

written with a view to the missal expiation as it is now practised in the world. To defraud and circumvent another person, every one knows to be unlawful. To injure widows, to plunder orphans, to harass the poor, to obtain the property of others by wicked arts, to seize any one's fortune by perjuries and frauds, to oppress a neighbour with violence and tyrannical terror, are universally acknowledged to be enormous crimes. How then do so many persons dare to commit all these sins, as if they might perpetrate with impunity? If we duly consider, we shall find that they derive fresh encouragement from no other cause than the confidence which they feel that they shall be able to satisfy God by the sacrifice of the mass, as a complete discharge of all their obligations to him, or at best that it affords them an easy mode of compromising with him. Plato afterwards goes on to ridicule the gross stupidity of those who expect by such expiations to be delivered from the punishments which they would otherwise have to suffer in hell. And what is the design of the obits, or anniversary obsequies, and the greater part of the masses, but that those who all their lifetime have been the most cruel of tyrants, the most rapacious of robbers, or abandoned to every enormity, as if redeemed with this price, may escape the fire of purgatory?

XVI. Under the other kind of sacrifices, which we have called *the sacrifice of thanksgiving*, are included all the offices of charity, which when we perform to our brethren, we honour the Lord himself in his members; and likewise all our prayers, praises, thanksgivings, and every thing that we do in the service of God: all which are dependent on a greater sacrifice, by which we are consecrated in soul and body as holy temples to the Lord. It is not enough for our external actions to be employed in his service: it is necessary that first ourselves, and then all our works, be consecrated and dedicated to him; that whatever belongs to us may conduce to his glory, and discover a zeal for its advancement. This kind of sacrifice has no tendency to appease the wrath of God, to procure remission of sins, or to obtain righteousness: its sole object is to magnify and exalt the glory of God. For it cannot be acceptable and pleasing to God, except from the hands of those whom he hath already favoured with the remission of their sins, reconciled



to himself, and absolved from guilt : and it is so necessary to the Church as to be altogether indispensable. Therefore it will continue to be offered for ever, as long as the people of God shall exist ; as we have already seen from the prophet. For so far are we from wishing to abolish it, that in that sense we are pleased to understand the following prediction : “ From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles ; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering : for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.” (*r*) So Paul enjoins us to “ present ” our “ bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is ” our “ reasonable service.” (*s*) He has expressed himself with the strictest propriety, by adding that this is our reasonable service ; for he intended a spiritual kind of divine worship, which he tacitly opposed to the carnal sacrifices of the Mosaic law. So “ to do good, and to communicate,” are called “ sacrifices with which God is well pleased.” (*t*) So the liberality of the Philippians in supplying the wants of Paul was “ an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, and well pleasing to God.” (*v*) So all the good works of the faithful are spiritual sacrifices.

XVII. Why do I multiply quotations ? This form of expression is perpetually occurring in the Scriptures. And even while the people were kept under the external discipline of the law, it was sufficiently declared by the prophets that those carnal sacrifices contained a reality and truth which is common to the Christian Church, as well as to the nation of the Jews. For this reason David prayed ; “ Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense ; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” (*w*) And Hosea called thanksgivings, “ the calves of our lips,” (*x*) which David calls “ offering thanksgiving ” and “ offering praise.” (*y*) In imitation of the psalmist, the apostle himself says, “ Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually ; ” and by way of explanation adds, “ that is, the fruit of our lips,” confessing or giving “ thanks to his name.” (*z*)

(*r*) Mal. i. 11.(*s*) Rom. xii. 1.(*t*) Heb. xiii. 16.(*v*) Phil. iv. 18.(*w*) Psalm cxli. 2.(*x*) Hosea xiv. 2.(*y*) Psalm l. 14, 23.(*z*) Heb. xiii. 15.

This kind of sacrifice is indispensable in the supper of the Lord, in which, while we commemorate and declare his death, and give thanks, we do no other than offer the sacrifice of praise. From this sacrificial employment, all Christians are called "a royal priesthood;" (a) because, as the apostle says, "By Christ we offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." For we do not appear in the presence of God with our oblations without an intercessor: Christ is the Mediator, by whom we offer ourselves and all that we have to the Father. He is our High Priest, who having entered into the celestial sanctuary, opens the way of access for us. He is our altar, upon which we place our oblations, that whatever we venture to do, we may attempt in him. In a word, it is he that "hath made us kings and priests unto God." (b)

XVIII. What remains then, but for the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and even children to understand this abomination of the mass? which being presented in a vessel of gold, has so inebriated and stupefied all the kings and people of the earth, from the highest to the lowest, that, more senseless than the brutes themselves, they have placed the whole of their salvation in this fatal gulf. Surely Satan never employed a more powerful engine to assail and conquer the kingdom of Christ. This is the Helen, for which the enemies of the truth in the present day contend with cruelty, rage, and fury; a Helen, indeed, with which they so pollute themselves with spiritual fornication, which is the most execrable of all.\* Here I touch not, even with my little finger, the gross abuses which they might pretend to be profanations of the purity of their holy mass; what a scandalous traffic they carry on, what sordid gains they make by their masses, with what enormous rapacity they gratify their avarice. I only point out, and that in few and plain words, the true nature of the most sanctimonious sanctity of the mass, on account of which it has attracted so much admiration and veneration for so many ages. For an illustration of such great mysteries proportioned to their dignity, would require a larger treatise; and I am unwilling

(a) 1 Peter ii. 9. (b) Rev. i. 6.

to introduce those disgusting corruptions which are universally notorious; that all men may understand that the mass, considered in its choicest and most estimable purity, without any of its appendages, from the beginning to the end, is full of every species of impiety, blasphemy, idolatry, and sacrilege.

XIX. The readers may now see, collected into a brief summary, almost every thing that I have thought important to be known respecting these two sacraments; the use of which has been enjoined on the Christian Church from the commencement of the New Testament until the end of time: that is to say, baptism, to be a kind of entrance into the Church, and an initiatory profession of faith; and the Lord's supper, to be a continual nourishment, with which Christ spiritually feeds his family of the faithful. Wherefore, as there is but "one God, one Christ, one faith," one Church the body of Christ, so there is only "one baptism," and that is never repealed; but the supper is frequently distributed, that those who have once been admitted into the Church, may understand that they are continually nourished by Christ. Beside these two, as no other sacrament has been instituted by God, so no other ought to be acknowledged by the Church of the faithful. For that it is not left to the will of man to institute new sacraments, will be easily understood, if we remember, what has already been very plainly stated, that sacraments are appointed by God for the purpose of instructing us respecting some promise of his, and assuring us of his good-will towards us; and if we also consider, that no one has been the counsellor of God, capable of affording us any certainty respecting his will, (c) or furnishing us any assurance of his disposition towards us, what he chooses to give or to deny us. Hence it follows, that no one can institute a sign to be a testimony respecting any determination or promise of his: he alone can furnish us a testimony respecting himself by giving a sign. I will express myself in terms more concise, and perhaps more humble, but more explicit; that there can be no sacrament unaccompanied with a promise of salvation. All mankind, collected in one assembly, can promise us nothing respecting our salvation. Therefore they can never institute or establish a sacrament.

(c) Isaiah xl. 14. Rom. xi. 34.



XX. Let the Christian Church, therefore, be content with these two, and not only neither admit nor acknowledge any other at present, but neither desire nor expect any other to the end of the world. For as the Jews, beside the ordinary sacraments given to them, had also several others, differing according to the varying circumstances of different periods, such as the manna, the water issuing from the rock, the brazen serpent, and the like, they were admonished by this variation not to rest in such figures, which were of short duration, but to expect from God something better, which should undergo no change and come to no end. But our case is very different: to us Christ has been revealed, “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” (c) in such abundance and profusion, that to hope or desire any new accession to these treasures would really be to displease God, and provoke his wrath against us. We must hunger after Christ, we must seek, contemplate, and learn him alone, till the dawning of that great day, when our Lord will fully manifest the glory of his kingdom, and reveal himself to us, so that “we shall see him as he is.” (d) And for this reason the dispensation under which we live is designated in the Scriptures as “the last time,” “these last times,” “the last days,” (e) that no one may deceive himself with a vain expectation of any new doctrine or revelation. For “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son,” (f) who alone is able to “reveal the Father,” (g) and who, indeed, “hath declared him” (h) fully, as far is necessary for our happiness, while “now we see” him “through a glass darkly.” (i) As men are not left at liberty to institute new sacraments in the Church of God, so it were to be wished that as little as possible of human invention should be mixed with those which have been instituted by God. For as wine is diluted and lost by an infusion of water, and as a whole mass of meal contracts acidity from a sprinkling of leaven, so

(c) Col. ii. 3.

(d) 1 John iii. 2.

(e) 1 John ii. 18. 1 Peter i. 20. Acts. ii. 17. (f) Heb. i. 1, 2.

(g) Luke x. 22.

(h) John i. 18.

(i) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

the purity of God is only polluted when man makes any addition of his own. And yet we see, as the sacraments are observed in the present day, how very far they have degenerated from their original purity. There is every where an excess of pageantries, ceremonies, and gesticulations; but no consideration or mention of the word of God, without which even the sacraments themselves cease to be sacraments. And the very ceremonies which have been instituted by God are not to be discerned among such a multitude of others, by which they are overwhelmed. In baptism, how little is seen of that which ought to be the only conspicuous object, I mean baptism itself? And the Lord's supper has been completely buried since it has been transformed into the mass; except that it is exhibited once a year, but in a partial and mutilated form.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

*The five other Ceremonies, falsely called Sacraments, proved not to be Sacraments: their Nature explained.*

THE preceding discussion respecting the sacraments might satisfy persons of docile and sober minds, that they ought not to carry their curiosity any further, or, without the sanction of the word of God, to receive any other sacraments beside those two which they know to have been instituted by the Lord. But as the opinion of seven sacraments has been so generally admitted in the common conversation of mankind, and prevailed the controversies of the schools, and the sermons of the pulpit; as it has gathered strength from its antiquity, and still keeps its hold on the minds of men; I have thought I should perform a useful service by entering into a closer and distinct examination of the five ceremonies, which are commonly numbered among the true and genuine sacraments of the Lord, by clearing away every fallacy, and exhibiting to the view of plain Christians the real nature of those ceremonies, and how falsely they have hitherto been considered as sacraments. Here, in the first place, I wish to declare to all the faithful, that I am

not induced to enter on this controversy respecting the term, by the least desire of contention, but that I am urged by important reasons to resist the abuse of it. I am aware that Christians have power over names as well as things, and may therefore apply words to things at their own pleasure, provided they retain a pious meaning, even though there be some impropriety of expression. All this I admit, though it would be better for words to be subject to things, than for things to be subject to words. The case of the term *sacrament*, however, is different. For those who maintain seven sacraments, give them all the same definition; that they are visible forms of invisible grace; they make them all alike vessels of the Holy Spirit, instruments of communicating righteousness, causes of obtaining grace. And the Master of the Sentences, Lombard, denies that the sacraments of the Mosaic law are properly designated by this appellation; because they did not communicate that which they prefigured. Is it to be endured that those symbols, which the Lord consecrated with his own mouth, and which he adorned with excellent promises, should not be acknowledged as sacraments; and, at the same time, that this honour should be transferred to those rites which are merely inventions of men, or, at least, are observed without any express command of God? Either, therefore, let them change their definition, or abstain from this abuse of the term, which afterwards generates false and absurd opinions. Extreme unction, they say, is a figure and cause of invisible grace, because it is a sacrament. If we ought, by no means, to admit their inference from the term, it certainly behoves us to lose no time in resisting their application of the term itself, that we may not be chargeable with giving any occasion to such an error. Again; to prove that ceremony to be a sacrament, they allege this reason; that it consists of the external sign and the word of God. If we find neither command nor promise respecting it, can we do otherwise than oppose it?

II. Now, it appears that we are not debating about the word, but raising a necessary and useful controversy respecting the thing itself. We must strenuously maintain, therefore, what we have already established by irrefragable argument, that the power to institute sacraments belongs to God alone,



for a sacrament ought to exhibit the certain promise of God, for the assurance and consolation of the consciences of the faithful; which could never receive such assurance and consolation from man. A sacrament ought to be a testimony to us of the good-will of God towards us; a testimony which no man or angel can ever give, as none has been "his counsellor." It is he alone, therefore, who, with legitimate authority, testifies to us concerning himself by means of his word. A sacrament is a seal by which the testament or promise of God is sealed. But it could not be sealed by corporeal things and the elements of this world, unless they were marked out and appointed for this purpose by the power of God. Therefore man cannot institute a sacrament; because it is not in human power to cause such great and divine mysteries to be concealed under such mean symbols. "The word of God must precede," as is excellently remarked by Augustine, "in order to make a sacrament to be a sacrament." Moreover, if we would avoid falling into many absurdities, it is requisite to preserve some distinction between a sacrament and other ceremonies. The apostles prayed on bended knees: shall we, therefore, never kneel without making it a sacrament? The early Christians are said to have turned their faces towards the east when they prayed: shall looking towards the east, then, be regarded as a sacrament? Paul says, "I will that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands," (*h*) and the prayers of the saints appear to have been often made with uplifted hands: shall elevation of hands also be made a sacrament? On this principle all the gestures of the saints would become sacraments. I would not insist on these things, however, if they were not connected with those greater inconveniencies.

III. If they wish to press us with the authority of the ancient Church, I assert that this is a groundless pretence. For the number of seven sacraments can no where be found in the ecclesiastical writers, nor is it clear when it was introduced. I grant, indeed, that the Fathers sometimes make too free a use of the word sacrament; but they use it indifferently to signify all ceremonies and external rites, and all exercises of piety.

(*h*) 1 Tim. ii. 8.

But when they speak of those signs which we ought to regard as testimonies of the grace of God, they are content with these two, baptism and the eucharist. That this may not be supposed to be a false allegation, I shall here cite a few testimonies from Augustine. To Januarius he says; "First, I wish you to know, what is the principal point of this controversy, that our Lord Jesus Christ, as he says in the gospel, has laid upon us an easy yoke and light burden. And, therefore, he has linked together the society of the Christian Church by sacraments, very few in number, most easy to observe, and excellent in signification. Such are, baptism, consecrated in the name of the Trinity, and the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, and if there be any other enjoined in the canonical Scriptures." Again, in his treatise On the Christian Doctrine; "Since the resurrection of our Lord, our Lord himself, and the practice of his apostles, instead of many signs, have given us few, and those most easy in performance, most excellent in signification, and most pure in observance: these are baptism, and the celebration of the body and blood of the Lord." Why does he make no mention here of the sacred, or septenary number? Is it probable that he would have omitted it, if it had then been instituted in the Church; especially as, in other cases, he was more curious in the observation of numbers than was at all necessary? And, when he names baptism and the Lord's supper, and is silent respecting any others, does he not sufficiently indicate, that these two mysteries possess superior and peculiar dignity, and that all other ceremonies occupy an inferior station? Wherefore, I affirm that these advocates for seven sacraments are not only unsupported by the word of the Lord, but also by the consent of the ancient Church, however they may boast of such consent. Let us now proceed to the particular ceremonies.

## CONFIRMATION.

IV. It was an ancient custom in the Church for the children of Christians, after they were come to years of discretion, to be presented to the bishop, in order to fulfil that duty which was required of adults who offered themselves to bap-

tism. For such persons were placed among the catechumens, till, being duly instructed in the mysteries of christianity, they were enabled to make a confession of their faith before the bishop and all the people. Therefore, those who had been baptised in their infancy, because they had not then made such a confession of faith before the Church, at the close of childhood, or the commencement of adolescence, were again presented by their parents, and were examined by the bishop according to the form of the catechism which was then in common use. That this exercise, which deserved to be regarded as sacred and solemn, might have the greater dignity and reverence, they also practised the ceremony of imposition of hands. Thus the youth, after having given satisfaction respecting his faith, was dismissed with a solemn benediction. This custom is frequently mentioned by the ancient writers. Leo, the Pope, says; "If any one be converted from heresy, let him not be baptised again; but let the influence of the Spirit, which he wanted among the heretics, be communicated to him by the imposition of the hands of the bishop." Here our adversaries will exclaim that any ceremony, by which the Holy Spirit is conferred, is properly denominated a sacrament. But the meaning of Leo in these words is sufficiently unfolded by himself in another place: "Whoever is baptised among heretics, let him not be rebaptised; but let him be confirmed by imposition of hands with invocation of the Holy Spirit; because he has received the mere form of baptism without the sanctification." It is also mentioned by Jerome against the Luciferians. And though, I confess, that Jerome is not altogether correct in stating it to have been a custom of the apostles, yet he is very far from the absurdities now maintained by the Romanists: and he even corrects that very statement by adding, that this benediction was committed wholly to the bishops, "rather in honour of the priesthood than from necessity imposed by any law." Such imposition of hands, therefore, as is simply connected with benediction, I highly approve, and wish it were now restored to its primitive use, uncorrupted by superstition.

V. Succeeding times have almost obliterated that ancient practice, and introduced I know not what counterfeit confir-



mation as a sacrament of God. They have pretended that the virtue of confirmation is to give the Holy Spirit for the augmentation of grace, who in baptism is given for innocence; to strengthen for warfare those who in baptism had been regenerated to life. This confirmation is performed by unction and the following form of words: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." All this sounds very beautifully and pleasantly. But where is the word of God which promises the presence of the Holy Spirit in this ceremony? They cannot allege a single iota. How then will they assure us that their chrism is the vessel of the Holy Spirit? We see oil, a thick and viscid liquid, and we see nothing besides. Augustine says: "Let the word be added to the element, and it will become a sacrament." Let the Romanists produce this word, if they wish us to contemplate in the oil any thing beyond the oil itself. If they acknowledged themselves ministers of the sacraments, as they ought to do, there would be no need of any further contention. The first law of a minister is to undertake nothing without a command. Now let them produce any command for this service, and I will not add another word on the subject. If they have no command, they can have no excuse for such sacrilegious audacity. On the same principle, our Lord interrogated the pharisees; "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" (k) If they had answered, From men; he would have extorted a confession that it was vain and frivolous: if From heaven, they would be constrained to admit the doctrine of John. To avoid too great an injury to John, therefore, they did not dare to confess it was from men. So, if confirmation be "of men," it is evinced to be vain and frivolous: if they wish to persuade us that it is from heaven, let them prove it.

VI. They defend themselves, indeed, by the example of the apostles, whom they consider as having done nothing without sufficient reason. This consideration is correct: nor would they receive any reprehension from us, if they shewed themselves imitators of the apostles. But what was the practice of the apostles? Luke relates, that "when the apostles, which

(k) Matt. xxi. 25.

were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John : who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost : for as yet he was fallen upon none of them : only they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” (l) And this imposition of hands is mentioned by the sacred historian on several occasions. I perceive what the apostles did ; that they faithfully executed their ministry. It was the Lord’s will, that those visible and wonderful graces of the Holy Spirit, which he then poured out upon his people, should be administered and distributed by his apostles with imposition of hands. Now, I do not conceive that the imposition of hands concealed any higher mystery, but am of opinion that this ceremony was employed by them as an external expression of their commending, and, as it were, presenting to God the person upon whom they laid their hands. If the ministry which was then executed by the apostles were still continued in the Church, imposition of hands ought also to be still observed : but since such grace is no longer conferred, of what use is the imposition of hands ? It is true that the people of God still enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose guidance and direction are indispensable to the existence of the Church. For we have the eternal promise, which can never fail, and in which Christ has said ; “ If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink living water.” (m) But those miraculous powers and manifest operations, which were distributed by imposition of hands, have ceased : nor was it right that they should continue but for a time. For it was necessary that the first preaching of the gospel, and the kingdom of Christ, at its commencement should be illustrated and magnified by miracles never seen or heard before : the subsequent cessation of which does not argue the Lord’s desertion of his Church, but is equivalent to a declaration from him that the magnificence of his reign and the dignity of his word had been sufficiently manifested. In what respect, then, will these impostors affirm that they imitate the apostles ? They should have done it by imposition of hands, that the evident power of

(l) Acts viii. 14—17.

(m) John vii. 37, 38.

the Spirit might immediately shew itself. This they do not practise. Why then do they boast that they are countenanced by the imposition of hands, which we find was used by the apostles, but for a totally different purpose.

VII. This is just as reasonable as it would be for any one to affirm the afflation, with which the Lord breathed upon his disciples, to be a sacrament by which the Holy Spirit is conferred. (*n*) But though the Lord did this once, he has never directed it to be done by us. In the same manner, the apostles practised imposition of hands during that period in which the Lord was pleased to dispense the visible graces of the Holy Spirit in compliance with their prayers: not in order that persons in succeeding times might counterfeit a vain and useless sign, as a mere piece of mimicry destitute of any reality. Besides, even if they could prove themselves to imitate the apostles in the imposition of hands, in which they have nothing similar to the apostles, except this preposterous mimicry, whence do they derive their oil, which they call the oil of salvation? Who has taught them to seek salvation in oil? Who has taught them to attribute to it the property of imparting spiritual strength? Is it Paul, who calls us off from the elements of this world, and sincerely condemns an attachment to such observances? (*o*) On the contrary, I fearlessly pronounce, not of myself, but from the Lord; that those who call oil, the oil of salvation, abjure the salvation which is in Christ, reject Christ, and have no part in the kingdom of God. For oil is for the belly, and the belly for oil; the Lord shall destroy both: all these weak elements “which perish with the using,” (*p*) have no connection with the kingdom of God, which is spiritual, and shall never perish. What then, it will be said, do you apply the same rule to the water with which we are baptised, and to the bread and wine used in the Lord’s supper? I answer, that in sacraments of divine appointment, two things are to be regarded; the substance of the corporeal symbol which is proposed to us, and the character impressed upon it by the word, in which consists all its virtue. Therefore, as the bread and wine and water, which are presented to our view in

(*n*) John xx. 22.(*o*) Gal. iv. 9. Col. ii. 20.(*p*) Col. ii. 22.



the sacraments, retain their natural substance, that observation of Paul is always applicable; "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them:" (q) for they pass and vanish away with the fashion of this world. But as they are sanctified by the word to be sacraments, they do not confine us to the flesh, but impart to us true and spiritual instruction.

VIII. Let us examine still more narrowly how many monsters are fostered by this oil. The dispensers of it say, that the Holy Spirit is given, in baptism for innocence, in confirmation for an augmentation of grace: that in baptism we are regenerated to life, and that by confirmation we are armed for warfare: and they have so far lost all shame, as to deny that baptism can be rightly performed without confirmation. What corruption! Are we not then "in baptism buried with Christ, planted together in the likeness of his death," that we may be "also in the likeness of his resurrection?" Now this fellowship with the death and life of Christ, Paul explains to consist in the mortification of the flesh, and the vivification of the Spirit: "that our old man is crucified with him, that we should walk in newness of life." (r) What is it to be armed for the spiritual warfare, if this be not? If they deemed it of no importance to trample under foot the word of God, why did they not at least reverence the Church, to which they wish to appear so uniformly obsequious? But what can be produced more severe against this doctrine of theirs, than the following decree of the council of Milevum? "Whoever asserts that baptism is only given for the remission of sins, and not for assistance of future grace, let him be accursed." When Luke, in a passage which we have already cited, speaks of some as having been "baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus," (s) who had not received the Holy Ghost, he does not absolutely deny that any gift of the Spirit had been imparted to those persons who had believed in Christ with the heart, and had confessed him with the mouth; he intends that gift of the Spirit which communicated his manifest powers and visible graces. So the apostles are said to have received the Holy

(q) 1 Cor. vi. 13.

(r) Rom. vi. 4—6.

(s) Acts xix. 5.

Spirit on the day of Pentecost; though Christ had long before declared to them; "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, which speaketh in you." (t) Let all who are of God, here observe the malicious and pestilent artifice of Satan. That which was truly given in baptism, he falsely asserts to be given in his confirmation; with the crafty design of seducing us unawares from baptism. Who can doubt now that this is the doctrine of Satan, which severs from baptism the promises which belong to that sacrament, and transfers them to something else? It is now discovered on what kind of a foundation this famous unction rests. The word of God is, that "as many as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ," (u) with his gifts. The word of these anointers is, That we have received no promise in baptism to arm us for the spiritual warfare. The word of God is the voice of truth; consequently the word of the anointers must be the voice of falsehood. I can, therefore, give a more correct definition of this confirmation than they have yet given of it: namely, that it is a manifest insult against baptism, obscuring and even abolishing its use; that it is a deceitful promise of the devil, seducing us from the truth of God: or, if the following be preferred, that it is oil polluted with the falsehood of the devil, to darken and deceive the minds of the simple.

IX. They further assert that all the faithful after baptism ought to receive the Holy Spirit by imposition of hands, that they may be found complete Christians; for that no one can be altogether a Christian who is never anointed with episcopal confirmation. These are their own words. But I thought that all things relating to Christianity had been comprehended and declared in the Scriptures. Now, it seems, the true form of religion is to be sought and learned from some other quarter. The wisdom of God, therefore, celestial truth, all the doctrine of Christ, only *begins* to make Christians; oil *completes* them. Such a sentiment condemns all the apostles, and a number of martyrs, who, it is certain, had never received this unction. For the holy chrism, the perfusion of which would complete their christianity, or rather make them Christians from being no Christians at all, had not then been manu-

(t) Acts ii. 4, &amp;c. Matt. x. 20.

(u) Gal. iii. 27.

factured. But these chrismatics abundantly confute themselves, without my saying a word. For what number of their people do they anoint after baptism? Why then do they suffer such semi-christians in their own community, from an imperfection which they might easily remedy? Why do they, with such supine negligence, suffer them to omit that which cannot be omitted without great criminality? Why do they not more rigidly insist upon a thing so necessary and indispensable to salvation; unless any one be prevented by sudden death? Surely while they suffer it to be so easily despised, they tacitly confess it not to be of so much importance as they pretend it to be.

X. In the last place, they determine that this sacred unction ought to be held in greater reverence than baptism: because it is only dispensed by the hands of the greatest prelates, whereas baptism is commonly administered by all priests. Must they not be considered as evidently mad, who discover such fondness for their own inventions, that in comparison with them they presume to undervalue the sacred institutions of God? Sacrilegious mouth, dost thou dare to place an unction, which is only defiled with thy fetid breath, and enchanted by the muttering of a few words, on a level with the sacrament of Christ, and to compare it with water sanctified by the word of God? But this would not satisfy thy presumption; thou hast even given it the preference! These are the responses of the holy see: they are the oracles of the apostolic tripod. But some of them have begun to moderate this infatuation, which even in their opinion was carried beyond all due limits. Confirmation is to be regarded, they say, with greater reverence than baptism; not perhaps for the greater virtue and advantage that it confers; but because it is dispensed by persons of superior dignity, and is applied to the nobler part of the body, that is, the forehead: or because it contributes a greater augmentation of virtue, though baptism is more available to remission. But in the first reason, do they not betray themselves to be Donatists, who estimate the virtue of the sacrament by the dignity or worthiness of the minister? I will grant, however, that confirmation be considered as more excellent from the dignity of episcopal hands.



But if any one inquire of them how such a prerogative has been conferred on bishops, what reason will they assign but their own pleasure? They allege, that the apostles alone exercised that right, being the sole dispensers of the Holy Spirit. Are bishops the only apostles; or are they apostles at all? Let us, however, grant that also: why do they not on the same principle contend that none but bishops ought to touch the sacrament of the blood in the Lord's supper; which they refuse to the laity, because the Lord, as they say, only gave it to the apostles? If our Lord gave it to the apostles alone, why do they not infer, Therefore it ought now to be given to bishops alone? But in this case they make the apostles simple presbyters; now they are hurried away with an extravagant notion suddenly to create them bishops. Lastly, Ananias was not an apostle; yet to him Paul was sent, that he might receive his sight, be baptised, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. (x) I will add one question more: If this was the peculiar office of bishops by a divine right, why have they dared to transfer it to common presbyters; as we read in one of the epistles of Gregory?

XI. How frivolous and foolish is the second reason, That they call their confirmation more excellent than the baptism instituted by God, because in confirmation the forehead is anointed with oil, and in baptism the crown of the head: as though baptism were performed with oil, and not with water! I appeal to all the faithful, whether these deceivers do not direct all their efforts to this one object; to corrupt the purity of the sacraments by the leaven of their false doctrine. I have already remarked, in another part of this Book, that in the sacraments it is scarcely possible to discern that which is of divine institution among the multiplicity of human inventions. If any one did not give credit to that observation of mine, let him now at least believe his own masters. By their passing over the water without the least notice, it appears that the only thing to which they attribute much importance in baptism, is their own oil. We therefore on the contrary affirm, that in baptism the forehead also is laved with water. In comparison

(x) Acts ix. 17, 18.

with this, we esteem all their oil perfectly worthless, whether in baptism or in confirmation. If any one allege that it is sold for more, this accession of price would only corrupt the good, if it contained any : an imposture of the foulest kind can never be legalized by robbery. In the third reason, they expose their impiety, when they pretend that a greater augmentation of virtues is conferred in confirmation than in baptism. The apostles, by imposition of hands, dispensed the visible graces of the Spirit. In what respect does their unction appear to be productive of any advantage? Let us leave these moderators, therefore, who cover one sacrilege with a number of others. It is a Gordian knot, which it is better to cut asunder than to spend much labour to unravel.

XII. Now when they find themselves stripped of the word of God, and of every probable argument, they resort to their usual pretext, that it is a very ancient usage, and confirmed by the consent of many ages. Though this allegation were true, it would not at all serve their cause. A sacrament is not from earth, but from heaven; not of man, but of God alone. If they wish their confirmation to be regarded as a sacrament, they must prove God to be the Author of it. But why do they allege antiquity, seeing that the ancient Fathers, whenever they mean to express themselves with strict propriety, nowhere enumerate more than two sacraments? If it were necessary to fortify our faith by the authority of men, we have an impregnable fortress, that those ceremonies, which our adversaries falsely pretend to be sacraments, were never acknowledged as sacraments by the ancients. The Fathers speak of imposition of hands; but do they call it a sacrament? Augustine explicitly affirms that it is no other than prayer. Here let them not oppose me with their foolish distinctions, that Augustine applied this remark to imposition of hands, not as practised in confirmation, but as used for the purpose of healing, or of reconciliation. The book is extant, and is in many hands. If I pervert the passage to any meaning different from that of Augustine himself, I am content to submit to their severest censure and contempt. For he is speaking of schismatics, who returned to the unity of the Church; and denies that they have any need of the reiteration of baptism, for that

imposition of hands was sufficient, in order that by the bond of peace, the Lord might give them his Holy Spirit. And as it might appear unreasonable to repeat imposition of hands rather than baptism, he shews the difference. "For what," he says, "is imposition of hands, but prayer over a man?" And that this was his meaning, is evident from another passage, where he says: "We lay hands upon reclaimed heretics, for the union of charity, which is the principal gift of the Holy Spirit, and without which whatever else may be holy in man is unavailing to salvation."

XIII. I sincerely wish that we retained the custom, which I have stated was practised among the ancients, before this abortive image of a sacrament made its appearance. For it was not such a confirmation as the Romanists pretend, which cannot be mentioned without injury to baptism; but a catechetical exercise, in which children or youths used to deliver an account of their faith in the presence of the Church. Now it would be the best mode of catechetical instruction, if a formulary were written for this purpose, containing and stating, in a familiar manner, all the articles of our religion, in which the universal Church of the faithful ought to agree, without any controversy: a boy of ten years of age might present himself to make a confession of his faith; he might be questioned on all the articles, and might give suitable answers: if he were ignorant of any, or did not fully understand them, he should be taught. Thus the Church would witness his profession of the only true and pure faith, in which all the people of the faithful unanimously worship the one God. If this discipline were observed in the present day, it would certainly sharpen the inactivity of some parents, who carelessly neglect the instruction of their children as a thing in which they have no concern, but which in that case they could not omit without public disgrace: there would be more harmony of faith among Christian people, nor would many betray such great ignorance and want of information: some would not be so easily carried away with novel and strange tenets: in short, all would have a regular acquaintance with Christian doctrine.



## PENANCE.

XIV. In the next place, they add penance; of which they treat in such a confused and disorderly manner, that the consciences of men can deduce no certain or solid conclusion respecting their doctrine. In another part of this Treatise, we have stated at large what we learn from the Scriptures respecting repentance, and likewise what is inculcated on that subject by the Romanists. Our present business is only to inquire briefly into the reasons of those persons who promulgated the opinion which has prevailed for a long period in the churches and in the schools, that penance is a sacrament. In the first place, I will make a few remarks on the practice of the ancient Church, the pretence of which they have abused for the introduction and establishment of their foolish invention. The order observed by the ancients in public penitence was, that persons who had completed the satisfactions enjoined upon them, were reconciled to the Church by solemn imposition of hands. This was a sign of absolution, to encourage the sinner himself with an assurance of pardon before God, and to admonish the Church that they ought to obliterate the memory of his offence, and kindly to receive him into favour. This Cyprian often calls "giving peace." To increase the importance of this act, and give it a greater recommendation among the people, it was ordained that it should always be done by the authority of a bishop. Hence that decree of the second council of Carthage: "Let no presbyter be permitted to reconcile a penitent publicly at the mass." And another decree of the council of Arausium: "Let those who during the period of their penitence depart out of this life, be admitted to the communion without the reconciliatory imposition of hands. If they recover from their illness, let them complete the period of their penitence, and then let them receive from the bishop the reconciliatory imposition of hands." Also the decree of the third council of Carthage: "Let not a presbyter reconcile a penitent without the authority of the bishop." The design of all these decrees was, to prevent the severity which they wished to preserve in this matter, from falling into disuse. Therefore they committed it to the cognizance of the bishop,

who was likely to be more circumspect in conducting the examination. But Cyprian states that it was not the bishop alone who laid hands on the penitent, but that all the clergy also united in this act. These are his words: "They do penance for a proper time, and then they come to the communion, and are restored to the right of communion by the imposition of the hands of the bishop and clergy." Afterwards, in process of time the custom was corrupted, so that they used this ceremony in private absolutions, without any public expression of penitence. Hence that distinction in Gratian, between public and private reconciliation. I consider that ancient custom, which is mentioned by Cyprian, to have been holy and useful to the Church, and could wish it were revived in the present day. This more recent one though I venture not to condemn or censure with severity, yet I consider it less necessary. We see, however, that imposition of hands on repentance is a ceremony of human, not of divine institution, and is to be placed among indifferent things and external exercises, such as are not to be despised, but ought to hold a station far below the sacraments, which are enjoined upon us by the word of God.

XV. Now the Romish theologians and schoolmen, who are in the habit of corrupting every thing by misrepresentation, take very great pains here to discover a sacrament, but to no purpose. Nor ought this to be wondered at, for they seek it where it is not to be found. When they have done their best, they leave the subject perplexed, doubtful, uncertain, and confounded with a variety of opinions. They say, then, that external penitence is a sacrament, and if it be so, that it ought to be considered as a sign of internal penitence, that is, of contrition of heart, which is the substance of the sacrament: or that both together constitute the sacrament, not two sacraments, but one complete one: but that external penitence is merely the sacrament; while that which is internal is both the sacrament and the substance of the sacrament; and remission of sins is the substance only, and not the sacrament. Let those who bear in mind the definition of a sacrament which we have already given, apply it to the examination of this pretended sacrament, and they will find that it is not an

external ceremony instituted by God for the confirmation of our faith. If they plead that my definition is not a law which they are bound to obey, let them hear Augustine, whom they profess to regard with the greatest reverence. He says; "Visible sacraments are instituted for carnal persons, that by the steps of the sacraments they may be led from those things which are visible to the eye, to those which are intelligible to the mind." What resemblance to this do they see themselves, or are they able to point out to others, in that which they call the sacrament of penance. The same writer says in another place; "It is therefore called a sacrament, because one thing is seen, another is understood in it. That which is seen has corporeal form; that which is understood has spiritual fruit." These things are not at all applicable to the sacrament of penance, which they have invented, in which there is no corporeal form to represent any spiritual fruit.

XVI. And to vanquish these champions on their own ground, if any sacrament be sought for here, would it not be far more plausible to say that the sacrament consists in the absolution of the priest, rather than in penitence, either internal or external? For it would be easy to say, that this is a ceremony appointed for the confirmation of our faith in the remission of sins, and has what they call the promise of the keys: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." (y) But some would have objected, that many who are absolved by priests, derive no such benefit from their absolution; whereas upon their principle the sacraments of the new law actually accomplish that which they represent. To this it might be replied; that as in the eucharist there is a twofold eating; sacramental, which is equally common to the good and the wicked; and spiritual, which is peculiar to the good; why might they not also imagine the reception of a twofold absolution. Yet I have never yet been able to comprehend what they intended by that principle of theirs, respecting the efficacious virtue of the sacraments of the new law; which we have proved to be altogether at variance with the truth of God, when we professedly discussed that subject. Here I only mean to shew that this diffi-

(y) Matt. xviii. 18.



culty is no objection to their calling sacerdotal absolution, a sacrament. For they might answer, in the language of Augustine, "That sanctification is sometimes without the visible sacrament, and that the visible sacrament is sometimes unaccompanied by internal sanctification:" Again: "That the sacraments effect that which they represent in the elect alone:" Again: "That some persons put on Christ as far as the reception of the sacrament, and others even to sanctification:" that the former is equally the case with the good and evil; and the latter with none but the good. Surely they have betrayed more than the weakness of children, and shewn themselves blind to the broad day, who in the midst of such difficulty and perplexity have not discovered a thing so plain and obvious to every one.

XVII. Yet let them not flatter themselves, for in whatever part they place their sacrament, I deny that it ought to be considered as a sacrament at all. First, because it is not accompanied with any special promise of God, which is the only foundation of a sacrament. Secondly, because all the ceremony exhibited here is the mere invention of men; whereas it has been already ascertained that sacramental ceremonies cannot be instituted, except by God himself. All that they have fabricated therefore, respecting the sacrament of penance, is nothing but falsehood and imposture. This counterfeit sacrament they have adorned with a suitable title, calling it a "a second plank after a shipwreck:" for that if any one by sin has soiled the garment of innocence received in baptism, he may purify it by penance. But this they say is the language of Jerome. Whose language soever it may be, it cannot be exculpated from manifest impiety, if it be explained according to their notion of it. As if baptism were effaced by sin, and ought not rather to be recalled to the memory of the sinner whenever he thinks of remission of sins, that it may serve to comfort his mind, inspire him with courage, and confirm his confidence of obtaining the remission of sins, which was promised to him in baptism. But that which Jerome has expressed with some degree of harshness and impropriety, that baptism, from which those who deserve to be excommunicated from the Church have fallen away, is repaired by penitence, these admirable expositors apply to their impiety. We shall speak with the greatest propriety therefore, if we call

baptism the sacrament of penitence; since it is given for a confirmation of grace, and seal of confidence, to those who meditate repentance. And that this must not be considered as an invention of ours, for beside its conformity to the language of Scripture, it appears to have been generally received in the ancient church as an indubitable axiom. For in the treatise on Faith addressed to Peter, which is attributed to Augustine, it is called "The sacrament of faith and repentance." And why do we resort to uncertain testimonies? Nothing can be required more explicit than what is recited by the Evangelists, that "John did preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (z)

#### EXTREME UNCTION.

XVIII. The third counterfeit sacrament is extreme unction; which is never performed but by a priest, and that in the last moments of life, with oil consecrated by a bishop, and the following form of words: "By this holy unction, and by his most tender mercy, may God pardon thee whatever sin thou hast committed by sight, by hearing, by smell, by taste, and by touch." They pretend that it has two virtues; remission of sins, and relief from bodily disease, if that be expedient, or otherwise the salvation of the soul. They say that the institution of it is established by James, who says; "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." (a) This unction of theirs is of the same kind as we have already proved their imposition of hands to be: it is a mere hypocritical farce, by which, without any reason, and without any advantage they affect to mimic the apostles. It is related by Mark, that the apostles at their first mission, according to the command which they had received from the Lord, ejected demons, cleansed lepers, healed the sick, and that in the cure of the sick they made use of oil. "They anointed with oil," he says, many that were sick, and healed them." (b) James had this in

(z) Matt. iii. 1—6. Luke iii. 2. (a) James v. 14, 15. (b) Mark vi. 13.

view when he directed the elders of the Church to be sent for to anoint the sick. That such ceremonies concealed no higher mystery, will easily be concluded by any attentive observers of the great liberty used by our Lord and his apostles in external things. When our Lord was about to restore sight to a blind man, he made clay of dust and spittle; some he healed with a touch, others with a word. In the same manner, the apostles cured some maladies with a mere word, others with a touch, others with unction. But it may be alleged that it is probable that this unction, like the other methods, was not employed without reason. This I confess; not however that they used it as an instrument of cure, but merely as a sign, to instruct the ignorance of the simple whence such virtue proceeded, that they might not ascribe the praise of it to the apostles. Now it is very common in the scriptures for the Holy Spirit and his gifts to be signified by oil. But that grace of healing has disappeared, like all the other miraculous powers, which the Lord was pleased to exhibit for a time, that he might render the preaching of the gospel, which was then new, the object of admiration for ever. Even though we should fully grant, therefore, that unction was a sacrament of the powers which were administered by the instrumentality of the apostles, it has nothing to do with us, to whom the administration of those powers has not been committed.

XIX. And what greater reason have they to make a sacrament of this unction, than of all the other signs or symbols which are mentioned in the Scriptures? Why do not they appoint some pool of Siloam, in which the sick may bathe themselves at certain seasons? (c) That, they say, would be a vain attempt. Surely not more in vain than unction. Why do they not "fall upon, and embrace" the dead, because Paul resuscitated a deceased young man by such means? (d) Why is not clay, composed of spittle and dust, converted into a sacrament? All the others, they say, were single examples, but the use of unction is commanded by James. I reply, that James was speaking in reference to that period in which this benediction of God was still enjoyed by the Church. They affirm indeed

(c) John ix. 7.

(d) Acts xx. 10.



that there is even now the same virtue in their unction; but we find it to be otherwise by experience. Let no one now wonder how they have so confidently deluded souls, whom they know to be stupid and blind when deprived of the word of God, which is their life and light, since they are not at all ashamed to attempt to deceive the living and observing senses of the body. They make themselves ridiculous, therefore, when they boast that they are endued with the gift of healing. The Lord is undoubtedly present with his people to assist them in all ages; and, whenever it is necessary, he heals their diseases as much as he did in ancient times: but he does not display those visible powers, or dispense miracles by the hands of apostles: because that gift was only of temporary duration, and is also in some respects lost by the ingratitude of men.

XX. As the apostles, therefore, had sufficient cause for using the symbol of oil as an evident testimony that the gift of healing, which had been committed to them, was not a power of their own, but of the Holy Spirit: so, on the other hand, they do a great injury to the Holy Spirit who represent a fetid oil, destitute of all efficacy, as his power. This is just as if any one were to affirm that all oil is the power of the Holy Spirit, because it is called by that name in the Scripture: or that every dove is the Holy Spirit, because he appeared under that form. But let them look to these things. For us, it is sufficient at present, that we see beyond all doubt that their unction is not a sacrament; being a ceremony which is neither of God's institution, nor accompanied with any promise from him. For when we require these two things in a sacrament, that it be a ceremony instituted by God, and that it have some promise of God, we at the same time require that the ceremony be enjoined upon us, and that the promise have reference to us. For no one contends that circumcision is now a sacrament of the Christian Church, notwithstanding it was instituted by God, and had a promise annexed to it: because it is not enjoined upon us, nor is the promise which was subjoined to it given to us on that condition. That the promise which they presumptuously boast of in their unction is not given to us, we have clearly proved, and they themselves declare by experience. The ceremony ought not to have been used, except by those who were endued

with the gift of healing; and not by these butchers, who are more capable of killing and murdering than of healing.

XXI. Even if they had established, what they are very far from having established, that the injunction of James respecting unction is applicable to the present age; still they would have made but little progress in defending their unction with which they have hitherto besmeared us. James directs that all sick persons be anointed: these men bedawb with their unguent, not sick persons, but half-dead corpses, when their souls are at the point of departing from them. If in their sacrament they have a present medicine, by which they can either alleviate the anguish of disease, or at least communicate some consolation to the soul, they are cruel never to apply the remedy in time. James directs, that the sick person be anointed by the elders of the Church: these men admit no anointer but a priest. Their explanation, that the term *elders* denotes priests, and that the plural number is used for the sake of dignity, is frivolous in the extreme: as though the Churches in that age abounded with priests, to be able to march in a long procession, carrying their box of consecrated oil. When James simply commands that sick persons be anointed, he appears to me to intend no other unction than of common oil; nor is any other mentioned in the narrative of Mark. These men deign to use no oil which has not been consecrated by the bishop; that is, warmed with his breath, enchanted by his muttering, and nine times saluted by him on bended knees; three times, *Hail, holy oil*; three times, *Hail, holy chrism*; three times, *Hail, holy balm*. From whom have they derived such incantations? James says, that when the elders shall have prayed over the sick person, anointing him with oil, if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him; that being absolved from guilt, he may obtain relief from pain: not meaning that sins are effaced by unction, but that the prayers of the faithful, by which the afflicted brother shall have been commended to God, shall not be in vain. These men impiously pretend, that sins are remitted by their holy, or, to speak more properly, abominable unction. See what lengths they will go, when they shall be allowed to abuse that passage of James by their absurd interpretation. And we

need not labour any longer in the proof; even their own histories relieve us from this difficulty. For they relate, that Pope Innocent, who presided over the Church of Rome, in the time of Augustine, decreed, that not only elders, but also all Christians, should use oil, in case of illness, for the purpose of anointing themselves or their friends.

#### ECCLESIASTICAL ORDERS.

XXII. The fourth place in their catalogue is occupied by the sacrament of Orders; but this is so fertile, that it is the parent of seven little sacraments which arise out of it. Now, it is truly ridiculous for them to affirm, that there are *seven* sacraments, and when they proceed to specify them, to enumerate *thirteen*. Nor can they plead, that the seven sacraments of orders are only one sacrament, because they all belong to one priesthood, and form as it were so many steps to it. For as it appears that in all of them there are different ceremonies, and they themselves say that there are different graces, no person can doubt that, if their principles be admitted, they ought to be called seven sacraments. And why do we controvert it as a doubtful thing, when they themselves plainly and distinctly declare that there are seven? In the first place, we will briefly suggest by the way, what numerous and great absurdities they obtrude upon us, when they wish us to receive their orders as sacraments: and then we will inquire, whether the ceremony which the churches use in ordaining ministers, ought to be called a sacrament at all. They mention seven ecclesiastical orders or degrees, which they dignify with the name of sacrament. They are, beadle, readers, exercists, acolothysts, subdeacons, deacons, priests. And they are seven, it is said, on account of the seven-fold grace of the Holy Spirit, with which those who are promoted to them ought to be endued; but it is increased, and more abundantly communicated to them, in their promotion. Now, the number itself is consecrated by a perverse interpretation of the Scripture: because they think they have read in Isaiah of seven virtues of the Holy Spirit; though, in truth, that prophet mentions only six, and had no intention of enumerating them all in that passage: for in other passages of



Scripture, he is called "the Spirit of life, of holiness, and of adoption," as he is there called "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord." (*f*) Other persons of greater subtilty limit not the orders to seven, but extend them to nine, in resemblance, they say, of the church triumphant. And they are not agreed among themselves; for some represent the clerical tonsure to be the first order of all, and episcopacy the last: others exclude the tonsure, and place the archiepiscopal office among the orders. Isidore distinguishes them a different way; for he makes psalmists and readers two separate orders, appointing the former to the chantings, and the latter to the reading of the Scriptures, for the instruction of the people. And this distinction is observed in the canons. In such a diversity, what do they wish us to pursue, or to avoid? Shall we say that there are seven orders? So teaches the master of the sentences, Lombard: but the most illuminated doctors determine otherwise; and these doctors differ among themselves. Moreover, the most sacred canons call us another way. This is the harmony exhibited by men, when they discuss divine subjects without the word of God.

XXIII. But this surpasses all folly, that in every one of their orders they make Christ a colleague with them. First, they say, he executed the office of Beadle, when he made a whip of small cords, and drove all the buyers and sellers out of the temple. He assumed the place of a Reader, when he read a passage of Isaiah in the synagogue. He discharged the function of an Exorcist, when, applying spittle to the ears and tongue of a man who was deaf and dumb, he restored his hearing and speech. He declared himself to be an Acolothyst in these words: "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness." He discharged the duty of a Subdeacon, when he girded himself with a towel, and washed the feet of his disciples. He sustained the character of a Deacon, when he distributed his body and blood in the Supper. He acted the part of a Priest, when he offered himself on the cross a sacrifice to the Father. It is impossible to hear these things without laughing, so that I wonder they were written without

(*f*) Ezek. i. 20. Rom. i. 4. viii, 15. Isaiah xi. 2, 3.

laughing; at least, if those who wrote them were men. But the most remarkable of all is, the subtilty with which they reason on the word *acolythyst*, which they call *ceroferarius*, a taper-bearer; a term of magic, I suppose, certainly unknown in any nation or language; whereas, the Greek word *ακολυθιστος*, *acolythyst*, simply signifies a *follower*, or *attendant*. But I should justly incur ridicule myself, if I were to dwell on a serious refutation of such things; they are so frivolous and ludicrous.

XXIV. To prevent them, however, from continuing their impositions on silly women, it is necessary, as we proceed, to expose their vanity. They create with great pomp and solemnity their readers, psalmists, beadle, acolythysts, to discharge those offices in which they employ either boys, or at least those whom they call laymen. For who, in most cases, lights the wax tapers, who pours wine and water into the flagon, but a boy, or some mean layman, who gets his livelihood by it? Do not the same persons chant? Do they not open and shut the doors of the churches? For who ever saw in their temples an acolythyst or beadle performing his office? On the contrary, he who when a boy discharged the duty of an acolythyst, as soon as he is admitted into that order, ceases to be what he begins to be called: so that it should seem to be their deliberate intention to discard the office when they assume the title. We see what need they have to be consecrated by sacraments, and to receive the Holy Spirit: it is, that they may do nothing. If they allege, that this arises from the perverseness of the present age, that men desert and neglect their official duties; let them at the same time confess, that their holy orders, which they so wonderfully extol, are of no use or benefit to the Church in the present day, and that their whole Church is filled with a curse: since it permits boys and laymen to handle the tapers and flagons, which none are worthy of touching, except those who have been consecrated as acolythysts: and since it leaves boys to chant those services, which ought never to be heard but from a consecrated mouth. But for what purpose do they consecrate their exorcists? I know that the Jews had their exorcists; but I find that they derived their name from the

exorcisms which they practised. Respecting these counterfeit exorcists, who ever heard of their exhibiting one specimen of their profession? It is pretended, that they are invested with power to lay hands upon maniacs, demoniacs, and catechumens: but they cannot persuade the demons that they are endued with such power; not only because the demons do not submit to their commands, but because they even exercise dominion over them. For scarcely one in ten can be found among them, who is not influenced by an evil spirit. Whatever ridiculous pretensions they may set up respecting their contemptible orders, are the mere compositions of ignorance and falsehood. Of the ancient acolothysts, beadles, and readers, we have spoken already, when we discussed the order of the Church. Our present design is only to combat that novel invention of a sevenfold sacrament in ecclesiastical orders: on which not a syllable is any where to be found, except among those sapient theologues, the Sorbonists and Canonists.

XXV. Let us now examine the ceremonies which they employ. In the first place, all whom they enrol in their army, they initiate into the rank of clergy by a common sign. They shave them on the crown of the head, that the crown may denote regal dignity; because ecclesiastics ought to be kings, to rule themselves and others: according to the language in which Peter addresses them; "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." But it was sacrilege for them to arrogate exclusively to themselves that which is attributed to the whole Church, and proudly to glory in the title which they had stolen from the faithful. Peter addresses the whole Church: they misapply his words to a few shavelings; as if they were the only holy persons, as if they alone had been redeemed by the blood of Christ, as if they alone had been made by him kings and priests unto God. They proceed to assign other reasons: that the top of their head is laid bare, to shew that their mind is free to the Lord, and can with open face contemplate the glory of God: or to indicate, that the faults of their mouth and eyes ought to be cut off: or that the tonsure of the crown signifies the relinquishment and renunciation of temporal things; and that the hair left round the crown denotes



the reliques of property which are reserved for their sustenance. Every thing is symbolical; because, with respect to them, the veil of the temple has not yet been rent asunder. Therefore, having persuaded themselves that they have completely discharged their duties, when they have represented such things by their shaven crown, they, in reality, fulfil none of them. How long will they impose upon us with such deceptions and falsehoods? Ecclesiastics, by shaving off a few hairs, signify that they have relinquished an abundance of temporal possessions, to be at liberty to contemplate the glory of God, and that they have mortified the inordinate propensities of their ears and eyes: but there is no class of men more rapacious, ignorant, or libidinous. Why do they not make an actual exhibition of sanctity, rather than counterfeit the appearance of it by false and delusive symbols?

XXVI. When they say that their clerical tonsure derives its origin and reason from the Nazarites; what is this but declaring that their mysteries have sprung from Jewish ceremonies, or, rather, are mere Judaism? But when they add, that Priscilla, Aquila, and Paul himself, after having made a vow, shaved their heads in order to purify themselves; they betray their gross ignorance. For this is nowhere said of Priscilla; and there is some uncertainty even respecting Aquila: for that tonsure may as well be referred to Paul as to Aquila. (*g*) But not to leave them what they require, that they have an example of this tonsure in Paul; it ought to be observed by the plain reader, that Paul never shaved his head with a view to any sanctity, but merely to accommodate himself to the weakness of his brethren. I am accustomed to call vows of this kind, vows of charity and not of piety, that is to say, they were not made for any purpose of religion, or as acts of service to God, but in order to bear the ignorance of weak brethren: as the apostle himself says; “Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews.” (*h*) Therefore he did this act, and that once, and for a short period, that he might accommodate himself to the Jews. When these men desire, without any cause, to imitate the purifications of the

(*g*) Acts xviii. 18.

(*h*) 1 Cor. ix. 20.

Nazarites, what is this but raising up a new Judaism by a culpable affectation of emulating that which is abolished? The same superstition dictated that decretal epistle, which prohibits ecclesiastics, according to the apostle, to let their hair grow, but enjoins them to shave in a circular form: as though the apostle, when he mentioned what is becoming to all men, were concerned about the circular tonsure of the clergy. Hence the readers may form some opinion of the importance and dignity of other succeeding mysteries, to which there is such an introduction.

XXVII. The true origin of the clerical tonsure is very evident from the testimony of Augustine. As in that age no persons suffered their hair to grow long, but such as were effeminate and affected an elegance and delicacy not sufficiently manly, it was thought that it would be a bad example to permit this custom in the clergy. They were, therefore, commanded to shave their heads, that they might exhibit no appearance of effeminate ornament. The tonsure then became so common, that some monks, to display their superior sanctity by something remarkable and distinguished from others, left their hair to grow very long. Afterwards, when the custom of wearing long hair was revived, and several nations were converted to Christianity, who had always been accustomed to wear their hair, as France, Germany, and England; it is probable that ecclesiastics every where shaved their heads, that they might not appear to be fond of the ornament of hair. At length, in a more corrupt age, when all the ancient institutions were either perverted or degenerated into superstition, because they saw no reason in the clerical tonsure, (for they had retained nothing but a foolish imitation of their predecessors), they had recourse to a mystery, which they now superstitiously obtrude upon us as a proof of their sacrament. Beadles, at their consecration, receive the keys of the Church, as a sign that the custody of it is committed to them. Readers are presented with the Holy Bible. To Exorcists are given the forms of exorcisms to be used over catechumens and maniacs. Acolothysts receive their tapers and flagons. These are the ceremonies which, if we believe them, contain such secret virtue as to be, not only signs and tokens, but even

causes, of invisible grace. For, according to their definition, all this is assumed when they insist on their being numbered among the sacraments. But, to conclude in a few words, I maintain it to be absurd for canonists and scholastic theologues to give the title of sacraments to these, which they themselves call *lesser orders*; since, even according to their own confession, they were unknown to the primitive church, and were invented many ages after. But, as sacraments contain some promises of God, they cannot be instituted by men or angels, but by God alone, whose prerogative it is to give the promise.

XXVIII. There remain three orders, which they call *greater orders*: of which Subdeaconry, they say, was transferred to this class after the number of the lesser orders began to increase. As they think that they have a testimony for these from the word of God, they peculiarly denominate them, for the sake of honour, *holy orders*. But we must now examine how perversely they abuse the divine appointments of God in their own vindication. We will begin with the order of presbyters, or priests. For by these two names they signify one thing: and these are the appellations which they apply to those whose office, they say, it is, to offer the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ upon the altar, to say prayers, and to pronounce benedictions on the gifts of God. Therefore, at their ordination they receive a chalice, with the patine and host, as symbols of the power committed to them to offer expiatory sacrifices to God; and their hands are anointed with oil, as a symbol to shew that they are invested with power to consecrate. The ceremonies we shall notice hereafter. Of the thing itself, I affirm, that it is so far from having a syllable of the divine word to support it, that it was impossible for them to have introduced a viler corruption of the order instituted by God. In the first place, it ought to be taken for granted, as we have shewn in the preceding chapter, on the Papal Mass, that great injury is done to Christ by all those who call themselves priests to offer sacrifices of expiation. He was constituted and consecrated by the Father, with an oath, a priest after the order of Melchisedec, without end, and without a successor. He once offered a sacrifice of eternal expiation and reconciliation; and now, having entered into the sanctuary of heaven,



intercedes for us. In him we are all priests; but it is only to offer to God praises and thanksgivings, in short, ourselves and all that belongs to us. It was his province alone, by his oblation, to appease God and expiate sins. When these men usurp that office to themselves, what follows, but that their priesthood is chargeable with impiety and sacrilege? They certainly betray the greatest effrontery when they dare to dignify it with the title of a sacrament. The imposition of hands, which is used at the introduction of the true presbyters and ministers of the church into their office, I have no objection to consider as a sacrament: for, in the first place, that ceremony is taken from the Scripture, and, in the next place, it is declared by Paul to be not unnecessary or useless, but a faithful symbol of spiritual grace. (i) I have not enumerated it as the third among the sacraments, because it is not ordinary or common to all the faithful, but a special rite for a particular office. The ascription of this honour to the christian ministry, however, furnishes no reason for pride in Romish priests: for Christ has commanded the ordination of ministers to dispense his gospel and his mysteries, not the inauguration of priests to offer sacrifices. He has commissioned them to preach the gospel and to feed his flock, and not to immolate victims. He has promised them the grace of the Holy Spirit, not in order to effect an expiation for sins, but rightly to sustain and conduct the government of the Church.

XXIX. There is an excellent correspondence between the ceremonies and the thing itself. Our Lord, when he sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel, “breathed upon them;” (k) by that symbol representing the power of the Holy Spirit which he imparted to them. These sapient theologues retain the *breathing*, and, as if they disgorged the Holy Spirit from their throats, they mutter, over the priests whom they ordain, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*. Thus they leave nothing that they do not preposterously counterfeit, I do not say, like comedians, whose gesticulations are not without art and meaning, but like apes, who imitate every thing without any taste or design. We observe, they say, the example of our Lord. But

(i) 1 Tim. iv. 14.

(k) John xx. 22.

our Lord did many things which he never intended to be examples to us. He said to Lazarus; "Lazarus, come forth." (*l*) He said to the paralytic; "Arise and walk." (*m*) Why do not they say the same to all deceased persons and paralytics? When he breathed upon his apostles, and filled them with the grace of the Holy Spirit, he exhibited a specimen of his divine power. If they attempt to do the same, they emulate God, and, as it were, challenge him to contend with them; but they are very far from producing a similar effect, and the foolish mimicry is a mere mockery of Christ. They have the effrontery, indeed, to dare to assert that they confer the Holy Ghost: but how far this is true is shewn by experience, which proves that those who are consecrated priests, from being horses become asses, and are changed from fools to madmen. Nor do I contend with them on this account: I only condemn the ceremony itself, which ought not to be made a precedent, since it was used by Christ as a special sign of a particular miracle: so far is their pretence of imitating him from justifying their conduct.

XXX. But from whom have they received the unction? Their answer is, that they have received it from the sons of Aaron, from whom also their order derived its origin. Thus they always prefer defending themselves by improper examples, to confessing that which they practise without just reason, to be their own invention: but at the same time, they do not consider that, in professing themselves successors of the sons of Aaron, they do an injury to the priesthood of Christ; which was the only thing adumbrated and prefigured by all the ancient priesthoods. In him, therefore, they were all accomplished and concluded, in him they ceased, as we have more than once already stated, and the Epistle to the Hebrews declares without the help of any comment. But, if they are so highly delighted with the Mosaic ceremonies, why do they not take oxen, and calves, and lambs, and offer them as sacrifices? They have, indeed, a great part of the ancient tabernacle, and of all the Jewish worship; but their religion is still deficient, in that they do not sacrifice animal victims? Who

(*l*) John xi. 43.(*m*) Matt. ix. 5. John v. 8.

does not see that this custom of anointing is far more pernicious than circumcision; especially when it is attended with superstition and a pharisaical opinion of the merit of the act? The Jews placed a confidence of righteousness in circumcision; in unction these men place spiritual graces. Therefore, while they desire to be imitators of the Levites, they become apostates from Christ, and renounce the office of pastors.

XXXI. This is their consecrated oil, which, it is pretended, impresses a character never to be effaced: as though oil could not be cleansed away with dust and salt, or, if it be more adhesive, with soap. But this character, they say, is spiritual. What connection has oil with the soul? Have they forgotten an observation, which they often quote to us from Augustine; That, if the word be separated from the water, it will be nothing but water, and that it is the word which makes it a sacrament? What word will they shew in their unction? Will they produce the command which was given to Moses to anoint the sons of Aaron? But in that case there was also a command given respecting the coat, the ephod, the mitre, the holy crown, with which Aaron was to be adorned; and respecting the coats, girdles, and mitres, with which his sons were to be invested. It was commanded to kill a bullock, to burn his fat, to cut one ram asunder and burn it, to sanctify their ears and garments with the blood of another ram; and numerous other observances, which I wonder how it is that they have entirely omitted, and taken only the anointing oil. But if they are fond of being sprinkled, why are they sprinkled with oil rather than with blood? They attempt, indeed, a most ingenious thing; to frame one religion out of a number of fragments, collected together from Christianity, Judaism, and Paganism. Their unction, therefore, is quite fetid, for want of the salt, the word of God. There remains imposition of hands, which I confess to be a sacrament in true and legitimate ordinations, but I deny that it has any place in this farce, in which they neither obey the command of Christ, nor regard the end to which the promise ought to lead us. If they wish the sign not to be refused to them, they must apply it to the very object to which it was dedicated.

XXXII. Respecting the order of deacons, also, I should



have no controversy with them, if that office were restored to its primitive purity, as it existed under the apostles, and in the purer times of the Church. But what resemblance to it is to be found among those whom the Romanists pretend to be deacons? I speak not of the persons, lest they should complain that it is unjust to estimate their doctrine by the faults of individuals; but I contend that, taking their deacons exactly as their doctrine describes them to us, it is absurd to fetch any testimony in their favour from the examples of those who were appointed deacons by the apostolic Church. They say that it belongs to their deacons to assist the priests, to minister in every thing that is done in the sacraments, as in baptism, in chrism, to pour the wine into the chalice, to place the bread in the patine; to lay and dispose the oblations upon the altar, to prepare and cover the table of the Lord, to bear the cross, to read and chant the gospel and epistle to the people. Is there in all this a single word of the true duty of deacons? Now let us hear how they are inaugurated. On the deacon who is ordained the bishop alone lays his hand: on his left shoulder he places a stole, to teach him that he has taken upon him the light yoke of the Lord, to subject to the fear of God every thing belonging to the left side: he gives him the text of the gospel, that he may know himself to be a herald of it. And what have these things to do with deacons? It is no better than if any one pretended to ordain apostles, whom he only appointed to burn the incense, to adorn the images, trim the lamps, to sweep the churches, to catch mice, and to drive out dogs. Who could suffer such persons to be called apostles, and to be compared with the apostles of Christ? Let them never again falsely represent those as deacons, whom they merely appoint to act a part in their farcical exhibitions. The very name which they bear sufficiently declares the nature of their office. For they call them Levites, and wish to deduce their origin from the sons of Levi. This I have no objection to their doing, provided they drop their pretensions to Christianity.

XXXIII. Of what use is it to say any thing respecting subdeacons? In ancient times they actually had the care of the poor: the Romanists attribute to them I know not what nugatory functions; as, to bring the chalice and patine, the

flagon with water, and the towel to the altar, to pour out water for washing the hands of the priests, and similar services. When they speak of the subdeacons receiving and bringing oblations, they mean those which they devour as consecrated to their use. With this office the ceremony of their initiation perfectly corresponds: they receive from the bishop the patine and chalice, from the archdeacon the flagon with water, the manual, and similar lumber. They require us to confess the Holy Ghost to be contained in these fooleries. What pious person can bear to admit this? But to come to an end, we may draw the same conclusion respecting them as respecting the rest; nor is it necessary to repeat any more of what we have already stated. This will be sufficient for persons of modest and docile minds, to whom this Book is addressed; that there is no sacrament of God, which does not exhibit a ceremony annexed to a promise, or rather, which does not present a promise in a ceremony. In this case, not a syllable is to be found of any certain promise: and, therefore, it is in vain to seek for a ceremony to confirm the promise. And of all the ceremonies which they use, not one appears to have been instituted by God: therefore there can be no sacrament.

## MATRIMONY.

XXXIV. The last of their sacraments is matrimony, which all confess to have been instituted by God, but which no one, till the time of Gregory, ever discovered to have been enjoined as a sacrament. And what man, in his sober senses, would ever have taken it into his head? It is alleged to be a good and holy ordinance of God; and so agriculture, architecture, shoemaking, and many other things are legitimate ordinances of God, and yet they are not sacraments. For it is required in a sacrament, not only that it be a work of God, but that it be an external ceremony appointed by God for the confirmation of a promise. That there is nothing of this kind in matrimony, even children can judge. But, they say, it is a sign of a sacred thing, that is, of the spiritual union of Christ with the Church. If by the word *sign* they mean a symbol pre-

sented to us by God to support our faith, they are very far from the truth: if by a sign they merely understand that which is adduced as a similitude, I will shew how acutely they reason. Paul says; "One star differeth from another star in glory: so also is the resurrection of the dead." (*n*) Here is one sacrament. Christ says; "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed." Here is another. Again; "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven." (*o*) Here is a third. Isaiah says; "Behold the Lord shall feed his flock like a shepherd." (*p*) Here is a fourth. Again; "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man." (*q*) Here is a fifth. And what end will there be? Upon this principle, every thing will be a sacrament: as many parables and similitudes as there are in the Scripture, there will be so many sacraments. Even theft will be a sacrament; because it is written; "The day of the Lord cometh as a thief." (*r*) Who can bear the foolish babblings of these sophists? I confess, indeed, that whenever we see a vine, it is very desirable to recal to remembrance the language of Christ; "I am the vine, ye are the branches, and my Father is the husbandman." (*s*) Whenever we meet a shepherd with his flock, it is good for us to remember another declaration of our Lord; "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (*t*) But if any one should class such similitudes among the sacraments, it would argue a want of mental sanity.

XXXV. They obtrude upon us the language of Paul, in which they say he expressly calls matrimony a sacrament. "He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: (or *sacrament*, as the word is rendered in the Vulgate) but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (*u*) But to treat the

(*n*) 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42.

(*p*) Isaiah xl. 10, 11.

(*r*) 1 Thess. v. 2.

(*t*) John x. 11.

(*o*) Matt. xiii. 31, 33.

(*q*) Isaiah xlii. 13.

(*s*) John xv. 1, 5.

(*u*) Ephes. v. 28—32.



Scriptures in this manner, is to confound heaven and earth together. To shew to husbands what peculiar affection they ought to bear to their wives, Paul proposes Christ to them as an example. For as he has poured forth all the treasures of his kindness upon the Church, which he had espoused to himself; so the apostle would have every man to evince a similar affection towards his wife. It follows; "He that loveth his wife, loveth himself; even as the Lord the Church." Now, to declare how Christ has loved the Church even as himself, and how he has made himself one with the Church his spouse, Paul applies to him what Moses relates Adam to have spoken of himself. For when Eve was brought into his presence, knowing her to have been formed out of his side, he said; "This is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." (*w*) Paul testifies that all this has been spiritually fulfilled in Christ and us, when he says; "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," and consequently "one flesh" with him. At length he concludes with an exclamation; "This is a great mystery:" and, that no one might be deceived by an ambiguity of language, he expressly states that he intends not the conjugal union of man and woman, but the spiritual marriage of Christ and his Church: "I speak concerning Christ and the Church." And, indeed, it is a great mystery, that Christ has suffered a rib to be taken from him, of which we might be formed: that is to say, though he was strong, he voluntarily became weak, that we might be strengthened with his might: so that now we "live, yet not" we, "but Christ liveth in" us. (*x*)

XXXVI. They have been deceived by the word *sacrament* in the Vulgate version. But was it reasonable that the whole Church should suffer the punishment of their ignorance? Paul has used the word *μυστήριον*, *mystery*: a word which the translator might have retained, *mysterium* being not unfamiliar to Latin ears, or he might have rendered it *arcanum*, secret: he preferred, however, to use the word *sacramentum*, sacrament, but in the same sense in which Paul has used the Greek word *μυστήριον*, *mystery*. Now let them go and cla-

(*w*) Gen. ii. 23.(*x*) Gal. ii. 20.

morously rail against the critical knowledge of languages, through ignorance of which they have so long been most shamefully deceived in a thing so easy and obvious to every one. But why do they so strenuously insist on the word *sacrament* in this one passage, and pass it over in so many others without the least notice? For that translator has used it twice in the First Epistle to Timothy, (*y*) and in another place in this Epistle to the Ephesians, (*z*) and in every other case where the word *mystery* occurs. Let this oversight, however, be forgiven them: liars ought, at least, to have good memories. For, after having dignified matrimony with the title of a sacrament, what brainless versatility is it for them to stigmatise it with the characters of impurity, pollution, and carnal defilement! What an absurdity is it to exclude priests from a sacrament! If they deny that they are interdicted from the sacrament, but only from the conjugal intercourse, I shall not be satisfied with this evasion. For they inculcate that the conjugal intercourse itself is part of the sacrament, and that it represents the union which we have with Christ in conformity of nature; because it is by that intercourse that a husband and wife become one flesh. Here some of them have found two sacraments: one, of God and the soul, in the man and woman when betrothed; the other, of Christ and the Church, in the husband and wife. The conjugal intercourse, upon their principles, however, is a sacrament, from which no Christian ought to be prohibited; unless the sacraments of Christians are so incompatible, that they cannot consist together. There is also another absurdity in their doctrine. They affirm that the grace of the Holy Spirit is conferred in every sacrament; they acknowledge that the conjugal intercourse is a sacrament: yet they deny that the Holy Spirit is ever present in that intercourse.

XXXVII. And, not to deceive the Church in one thing only, what a long series of errors, falsehoods, frauds, and iniquities have they joined to that false principle! It may truly be affirmed that, when they made matrimony into a sacrament, they only sought a den of all abominations. For, when they had once established this notion, they assumed to themselves

(*y*) 1 Tim. iii. 9, 16.

(*z*) Ephes. iii. 9.

the cognizance of matrimonial causes; for matrimony was a spiritual thing, and not to be meddled with before lay judges. Then they made laws for the confirmation of their tyranny; and some of them manifestly impious towards God, and others most unjust towards men. Such as; that marriages contracted between young persons subject to the authority of parents, without the consent of their parents, remain valid and permanent: that no marriages be lawful between persons related, even to the seventh degree; and that, if any such be contracted, they be dissolved; (and the degrees themselves they state in opposition to the laws of all nations and to the institution of Moses, so that what they call the fourth degree is, in reality, the seventh): that it be unlawful for a man, who has repudiated his wife for adultery, to marry another: that spiritual relatives be not united in marriage: that no marriages be celebrated from Septuagesima, or the third Sunday before Lent, to the octaves of Easter, or eight days after that festival; for three weeks before the nativity of John the Baptist, or Midsummer-day, instead of which three weeks they now substitute the Whitsun week and the two weeks which precede it; or from Advent to the Epiphany; and innumerable other regulations, which it would be tedious to enumerate. We must now quit their corruptions, in which we have been detained longer than I could wish: but I think I have gained some advantage by stripping these asses, in some measure, of the lion's skin, and so far unmasking their principles, and exposing them to the world in their true colours.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### *On Civil Government.*

**H**AVING already stated that man is the subject of two kinds of government, and having sufficiently discussed that which is situated in the soul, or the inner man, and relates to eternal life; we are, in this chapter, to say something of the other kind, which relates to civil justice, and the regulation of the external conduct. For, though the nature of this argument



seems to have no connection with the spiritual doctrine of faith which I have undertaken to discuss, the sequel will shew that I have sufficient reason for connecting them together, and, indeed, that necessity obliges me to it: especially since, on the one hand, infatuated and barbarous men madly endeavour to subvert this ordinance established by God; and, on the other hand, the flatterers of princes, extolling their power beyond all just bounds, hesitate not to oppose it to the authority of God himself. Unless both these errors be resisted, the purity of the faith will be destroyed. Besides, it is of no small importance for us to know what benevolent provision God hath made for mankind in this instance, that we may be stimulated by a greater degree of pious zeal to testify our gratitude. In the first place, before we enter on the subject itself, it is necessary for us to recur to the distinction which we have already established, lest we fall into an error very common in the world, and injudiciously confound together these two things, the nature of which is altogether different. For some men, when they hear that the gospel promises a liberty which acknowledges no king or master among men, but submits to Christ alone, think they can enjoy no advantage of their liberty, while they see any power exalted above them. They imagine, therefore, that nothing will prosper, unless the whole world be modelled in a new form, without any tribunals, or laws, or magistrates, or any thing of a similar kind, which they consider injurious to their liberty. But he, who knows how to distinguish between the body and the soul, between this present transitory life and the future eternal one, will find no difficulty in understanding, that the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things very different and remote from each other. Since it is a jewish folly, therefore, to seek and include the kingdom of Christ under the elements of this world; let us, on the contrary, considering what the scripture clearly inculcates, that the benefit which is received from the grace of Christ is spiritual; let us, I say, remember to confine within its proper limits all this liberty which is promised and offered to us in him. For why is it that the same apostle who, in one place exhorts to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled

again with the yoke of bondage," (a) in another, enjoins servants to "care not for" their servile condition; (b) except, that spiritual liberty may very well consist with civil servitude? In this sense we are likewise to understand him in these passages. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female:" (c) Again: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all:" (d) in which he signifies, that it is of no importance, what is our condition among men, or under the laws of what nation we live, as the kingdom of Christ consists not in these things.

II. Yet this distinction does not lead us to consider the whole system of civil government as a polluted thing, which has nothing to do with christian men. Some fanatics, who are pleased with nothing but liberty, or rather licentiousness without any restraint, do indeed boast and vociferate, That since we are dead with Christ to the elements of this world, and being translated into the kingdom of God, sit among the celestials, they think it a degradation to us, and far beneath our dignity, to be occupied with those secular and impure cares which relate to things altogether uninteresting to a christian man. Of what use, they ask, are laws without judgments and tribunals? But what have judgments to do with a christian man? And if it be unlawful to kill, of what use are laws and judgments to us? But as we have just suggested that this kind of government is distinct from that spiritual and internal reign of Christ, so it ought to be known that they are in no respect at variance with each other. For that spiritual reign even, now upon earth, commences within us some preludes of the heavenly kingdom, and in this mortal and transitory life affords us some prelibations of immortal and incorruptible blessedness: but this civil government is designed, as long as we live in this world, to cherish and support the external worship of God, to preserve the pure doctrine of religion, to defend the constitution of the Church, to regulate our lives in a manner requisite for the society of men, to form our manners to civil justice, to promote our concord with each other, and to establish general peace and

(a) Gal. v. 1.

(b) 1 Cor. vii. 21.

(c) Gal. iii. 28.

(d) Col. iii. 11.

tranquillity : all which I confess to be superfluous, if the kingdom of God, as it now exists in us, extinguish the present life. But if it be the will of God, that while we are aspiring towards our true country, we be pilgrims on the earth, and if such aids be necessary to our pilgrimage ; they who take them from man deprive him of his human nature. They plead that there is so much perfection in the Church of God, that its order is sufficient to supply the place of all laws ; but they foolishly imagine a perfection, which can never be found in any community of men. For since the insolence of the wicked is so great, and their iniquity so obstinate that it can scarcely be restrained by all the severity of the laws, what may we expect they would do, if they found themselves at liberty to perpetrate crimes with impunity, whose outrages even the arm of power cannot altogether prevent ?

III. But for speaking of the exercise of civil polity, there will be another place more suitable. At present we only wish it to be understood, that to entertain a thought of its extermination, is inhuman barbarism ; it is equally as necessary to mankind as bread and water, light and air, and far more excellent. For it not only tends to secure the accommodations arising from all these things, that men may breathe, eat, drink, and be sustained in life, though it comprehends all these things while it causes them to live together, yet I say this is not its only tendency ; its objects also are, that idolatry, sacrileges against the name of God, blasphemies against his truth, and other offences against religion, may not openly appear and be disseminated among the people ; that the public tranquillity may not be disturbed ; that every person may enjoy his property without molestation ; that men may transact their business together without fraud or injustice ; that integrity and modesty may be cultivated between them : in short, that there may be a public form of religion among christians, and that humanity may be maintained among men. Nor let any one think it strange that I now refer to human polity the charge of the due maintenance of religion, which I may appear to have placed beyond the jurisdiction of men. For I do not allow men to make laws respecting religion and the worship of God now, any more than I did before ; though I approve of civil government, which provides that the true religion which



is contained in the law of God, be not violated, and polluted by public blasphemies, with impunity. But the perspicuity of order will assist the readers to attain a clearer understanding of what sentiments ought to be entertained respecting the whole system of civil administration, if we enter on a discussion of each branch of it. These are three: The Magistrate, who is the guardian and conservator of the laws: The Laws, according to which he governs: The People, who are governed by the laws, and obey the magistrate. Let us, therefore, examine, first, the function of a magistrate, whether it be a legitimate calling and approved by God, the nature of the duty, and the extent of the power: secondly, by what laws christian government ought to be regulated: and lastly, what advantage the people derive from the laws, and what obedience they owe to the magistrate.

IV. The Lord hath not only testified that the function of magistrates has his approbation and acceptance, but hath eminently commended it to us, by dignifying it with the most honourable titles. We will mention a few of them. When all who sustain the magistracy are called "gods," (*e*) it ought not to be considered as an appellation of trivial importance: for it implies, that they have their command from God, that they are invested with his authority, and are altogether his representatives, and act as his vicegerents. This is not an invention of mine, but the interpretation of Christ, who says; "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken." (*f*) What is the meaning of this, but that their commission has been given to them by God, to serve him in their office, and, as Moses and Jehoshaphat said to the judges whom they appointed, to "judge not for man, but for the Lord?" (*g*) To the same purpose is the declaration of the wisdom of God by the mouth of Solomon: "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." (*h*) This is just as if it had been affirmed, that the authority possessed by kings and other governors over all things upon earth is not a consequence of the perverseness of men, but of the providence and holy ordinance of God; who hath been pleased to regulate human

(*e*) Psalm lxxxii. 1, 6.

(*f*) John x. 35.

(*g*) Deut. i. 16, 17. 2 Chron. xix. 6.

(*h*) Prov. viii. 15, 16.

affairs in this manner; forasmuch as he is present, and also presides among them, in making laws and in executing equitable judgments. This is clearly taught by Paul, when he enumerates governments (*ο προϊσταμενος*) (*i*) among the gifts of God, which being variously distributed according to the diversity of grace, ought to be employed by the servants of Christ to the edification of the Church. For though in that place he is properly speaking of the council of elders, who were appointed in the primitive Church to preside over the regulation of the public discipline, the same office which in writing to the Corinthians he calls *κυβερνησεις* “governments;” (*k*) yet as we see that civil government tends to promote the same object, there is no doubt that he recommends to us every kind of just authority. But he does this in a manner much more explicit, where he enters on a full discussion of that subject. For he says, “There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Rulers are ministers of God, revengers to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.” (*l*) This is corroborated by the examples of holy men; of whom some have been kings, as David, Josiah, Hezekiah; some have been viceroys, as Joseph and Daniel; some have held civil offices in a commonwealth, as Moses, Joshua, and the Judges; whose functions God declared to be approved by him. Wherefore no doubt ought now to be entertained by any person that civil magistracy is a calling, not only holy and legitimate, but far the most sacred and honourable in human life.

V. Those who would wish to introduce anarchy, reply, that though in ancient times kings and judges presided over a rude people, that servile kind of government is now quite incompatible with the perfection which accompanies the gospel of Christ. Here they betray not only their ignorance, but their diabolical pride, in boasting of perfection, of which not the smallest particle can be discovered in them. But whatever their characters may be, they are easily refuted. For when David exhorts kings and judges to kiss the Son of God, (*m*) he does not command them to abdicate their authority and retire

(*i*) Rom. xii. 8.

(*k*) 1 Cor. xii. 28

(*l*) Rom. xiii. 1, 3, 4.

(*m*) Psalm ii. 10—12.

to private life, but to submit to Christ the power with which they are invested, that he alone may have the pre-eminence over all. In like manner Isaiah, when he predicts that “kings shall be nursing-fathers and queens nursing-mothers” to the Church, *(n)* does not depose them from their thrones; but rather establishes them by an honourable title, as patrons and protectors of the pious worshippers of God: for that prophecy relates to the advent of Christ. I purposely omit numerous testimonies, which often occur, and especially in the Psalms, in which the rights of all governors are asserted. But the most remarkable of all is that passage where Paul, admonishing Timothy that in the public congregation, “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for kings and for all that are in authority,” assigns as a reason, “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty:” *(o)* language in which he recommends the state of the Church to their patronage and defence.

VI. This consideration ought continually to occupy the magistrates themselves, since it is calculated to furnish them with a powerful stimulus, by which they may be excited to their duty, and to afford them peculiar consolation, by which the difficulties of their office, which certainly are many and arduous, may be alleviated. For what an ardent pursuit of integrity, prudence, clemency, moderation, and innocence ought they to prescribe to themselves, who are conscious of having been constituted ministers of the divine justice! With what confidence will they admit iniquity to their tribunal, which they understand to be the throne of the living God? With what audacity will they pronounce an unjust sentence with that mouth which they know to be the destined organ of divine truth? With what conscience will they subscribe to impious decrees with that hand which they know to be appointed to register the edicts of God? In short, if they remember that they are the vicegerents of God, it behoves them to watch with all care, earnestness, and diligence, that in their administration they may exhibit to men an image, as it were, of the providence, care, goodness, benevolence, and justice of God. And they

*(n)* Isaiah xlix. 23.

*(o)* 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.



must constantly bear this in mind, that if in all cases "he be cursed that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully," (*p*) a far heavier curse awaits those who act fraudulently in a righteous calling. Therefore when Moses and Jehoshaphat wished to exhort their judges to the discharge of their duty, they had nothing to suggest more efficacious than the principle which we have already mentioned. Moses says, "Judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. For the judgment is God's." (*q*) Jehoshaphat says, "Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you: take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God." (*r*) And in another place it is said, "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods;" (*s*) that they may be animated to their duty, when they understand that they are delegated by God, to whom they must one day render an account of their administration. And this admonition is entitled to have considerable weight with them: for if they fail in their duty, they not only injure men by criminally distressing them, but even offend God by polluting his sacred judgments. On the other hand, it opens a source of peculiar consolation to them to reflect, that they are not employed in profane things, or occupations unsuitable to a servant of God, but in a most sacred function, inasmuch as they execute a divine commission.

VII. Those who are not restrained by so many testimonies of Scripture, but still dare to stigmatise this sacred ministry as a thing incompatible with religion and christian piety, do they not offer an insult to God himself, who cannot but be involved in the reproach cast upon his ministry? And in fact they do not reject magistrates, but they reject God, "that he should not reign over them." (*t*) For if this was truly asserted by the Lord respecting the people of Israel, because they refused the government of Samuel, why shall it not now be affirmed with equal truth of those who take the liberty to outrage all the authorities which God hath instituted? But they

(*p*) Jer. xlviii. 10.(*q*) Deut. i. 16, 17.(*r*) 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7.(*s*) Psalm lxxii. 1.(*t*) 1 Sam. viii. 7.

object that our Lord said to his disciples, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them: but ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve:" (v) and they contend that these words prohibit the exercise of royalty, or any other authority, by any christians. Admirable expositors! A contention had arisen among the disciples "which of them should be accounted the greatest." To repress this vain ambition, our Lord taught them that their ministry was not like temporal kingdoms, in which one person has the pre-eminence over all others. Now what dishonour does this comparison cast upon regal dignity? What does it prove at all, except that the regal office is not the apostolic ministry? Moreover, though there are various forms of magistracy, yet there is no difference in this respect, but we ought to receive them all as ordinances of God. For Paul comprehends them all together, when he says, that "there is no power but of God:" and that which was furthest from giving general satisfaction, is recommended to us in a remarkable manner beyond all others; namely, the government of one man: which, as it is attended with the common servitude of all, except the single individual to whose will all others are subjected, has never been so highly approved by heroic and noble minds. But the Scripture, on the contrary, to correct these unjust sentiments, expressly affirms, that it is by the providence of Divine wisdom that kings reign, and particularly commands us to "honour the king." (w)

VIII. And for private men, who have no authority to deliberate on the regulation of any public affairs, it would surely be a vain occupation to dispute which would be the best form of government in the place where they live. Besides, this could not be simply determined, as an abstract question, without great impropriety, since the principle to guide the decision must depend on circumstances. And even if we compare the different forms together, without their circumstances, their advantages are so nearly equal, that it will not be easy to discover of which the utility preponderates. The forms of civil

(v) Luke xxii. 25, 26. (w) Rom. xiii. 1, &c. Prov. viii. 15. 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 17.

government are considered to be of three kinds: Monarchy, which is the dominion of one person, whether called a king, or a duke, or any other title: Aristocracy, or the dominion of the principal persons of a nation: and Democracy, or popular government, in which the power resides in the people at large. It is true that the transition is easy from monarchy to despotism; it is not much more difficult from aristocracy to oligarchy, or the faction of a few; but it is most easy of all from democracy to sedition. Indeed, if these three forms of government, which are stated by philosophers, be considered in themselves, I shall by no means deny, that either aristocracy or a mixture of aristocracy and democracy far excels all others; and that indeed not of itself, but because it very rarely happens that kings regulate themselves so that their will is never at variance with justice and rectitude; or in the next place, that they are endued with such penetration and prudence, as in all cases to discover what is best. The vice or imperfection of men therefore renders it safer and more tolerable for the government to be in the hands of many, that they may afford each other mutual assistance and admonition, and that if any one arrogate to himself more than is right, the many may act as censors and masters to restrain his ambition. This has always been proved by experience, and the Lord confirmed it by his authority, when he established a government of this kind among the people of Israel, with a view to preserve them in the most desirable condition, till he exhibited in David a type of Christ. And as I readily acknowledge that no kind of government is more happy than this, where liberty is regulated with becoming moderation, and properly established on a durable basis, so also I consider those as the most happy people, who are permitted to enjoy such a condition; and if they exert their strenuous and constant efforts for its preservation and retention, I admit that they act in perfect consistence with their duty. And to this object the magistrates likewise ought to apply their greatest diligence, that they suffer not the liberty, of which they are constituted guardians, to be in any respect diminished, much less to be violated: if they are inactive and unconcerned about this, they are perfidious to their office, and traitors to their country. But if those, to whom the will of God has



assigned another form of government, transfer this to themselves so as to be tempted to desire a revolution, the very thought will be not only foolish and useless, but altogether criminal. If we limit not our views to one city, but look round and take a comprehensive survey of the whole world, or at least extend our observations to distant lands, we shall certainly find it to be a wise arrangement of Divine providence that various countries are governed by different forms of civil polity: for they are admirably held together with a certain inequality, as the elements are combined in very unequal proportions. All these remarks, however, will be unnecessary to those who are satisfied with the will of the Lord. For if it be his pleasure to appoint kings over kingdoms, and senators or other magistrates over free cities, it is our duty to be obedient to any governors whom God hath established over the places in which we reside.

IX. Here it is necessary to state in a brief manner the nature of the office of magistracy, as described in the word of God, and wherein it consists. If the Scripture did not teach that this office extends to both tables of the law, we might learn it from heathen writers: for not one of them has treated of the office of magistrates, of legislation, and civil government, without beginning with religion and divine worship. And thus they have all confessed that no government can be happily constituted, unless its first object be the promotion of piety, and that all laws are preposterous which neglect the claims of God, and merely provide for the interests of men. Therefore as religion holds the first place among all the philosophers, and as this has always been regarded by the universal consent of all nations, christian princes and magistrates ought to be ashamed of their indolence, if they do not make it the object of their most serious care. We have already shewn that this duty is particularly enjoined upon them by God; for it is reasonable that they should employ their utmost efforts in asserting and defending the honour of him, whose vicegerents they are, and by whose favour they govern. And the principal commendations given in the Scripture to the good kings are for having restored the worship of God when it had been corrupted or abolished, or for having devoted their attention to

religion, that it might flourish in purity and safety under their reigns. On the contrary, the sacred history represents it as one of the evils arising from anarchy, or a want of good government, that when "there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (x) These things evince the folly of those who would wish magistrates to neglect all thoughts of God, and to confine themselves entirely to the administration of justice among men: as though God appointed governors in his name to decide secular controversies, and disregarded that which is of far greater importance, the pure worship of himself according to the rule of his law. But a rage for universal innovation, and a desire to escape with impunity, instigate men of turbulent spirits to wish that all the avengers of violated piety were removed out of the world. With respect to the second table, Jeremiah admonishes kings in the following manner: "Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood." (y) To the same purpose is the exhortation in the eighty-second Psalm: "Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy: deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked." (z) And Moses "charged the judges" whom he appointed to supply his place, "saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him: ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's." (a) I forbear to remark the directions given by him in another place respecting their future kings: "He shall not multiply horses to himself: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold: his heart shall not be lifted up above his brethren: he shall read in the law all the days of his life:" (b) also that judges shew no partiality, nor take bribes, with similar injunctions which abound in the Scriptures: because in describing the office of magistrates in this treatise, my design is not so much

(x) Judges xxi. 25.

(y) Jer. xxii. 3.

(z) Psalm lxxxii. 3, 4.

(a) Deut. i. 16, 17.

(b) Deut. xvii. 16, 17, 19, 20.

to instruct magistrates themselves, as to shew to others what magistrates are, and for what end God hath appointed them. We see therefore that they are constituted the protectors and vindicators of the public innocence, modesty, probity, and tranquillity, whose sole object it ought to be to promote the common peace and security of all. Of these virtues, David declares that he will be an example, when he shall be exalted to the royal throne. "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I will not know a wicked person. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will I not suffer. Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." (c) But as they cannot do this, unless they defend good men from the injuries of the wicked, and aid the oppressed by their relief and protection; they are likewise armed with power for the suppression of crimes, and the severe punishment of malefactors, whose wickedness disturbs the public peace. For experience fully verifies the observation of Solon: "That all states are supported by reward and punishment; and that when these two things are removed, all the discipline of human societies is broken and destroyed." For the minds of many lose their regard for equity and justice, unless virtue be rewarded with due honour; nor can the violence of the wicked be restrained, unless crimes are followed by severe punishments. And these two parts are included in the injunction of the prophet to kings and other governors, to "execute judgment and righteousness." (d) *Righteousness* means the care, patronage, defence, vindication, and liberation of the innocent: *judgment* imports the repression of the audacity, the coercion of the violence, and the punishment of the crimes of the impious.

X. But here, it seems, arises an important and difficult question. If by the law all christians are forbidden to kill, (e) and the prophet predicts respecting the Church, that "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; saith the Lord;" (f) how can it be compatible with piety for magistrates

(c) Psalm ci. 3—6.

(d) Jer. xxii. 3.

(e) Exod. xx. 13.

(f) Isaiah xi. 9. lxx. 25.



to shed blood? But if we understand, that in the infliction of punishments, the magistrate does not act at all from himself, but merely executes the judgments of God, we shall not be embarrassed with this scruple. The law of the Lord commands, “Thou shalt not kill:” but that homicide may not go unpunished, the legislator himself puts the sword into the hands of his ministers, to be used against all homicides. (g) *To hurt* and *to destroy* are incompatible with the character of the faithful: but to avenge the afflictions of the righteous at the command of God, is neither *to hurt* nor *to destroy*. Therefore it is easy to conclude that in this respect magistrates are not subject to the common law; by which, though the Lord binds the hands of men, he does not bind his own justice which he exercises by the hands of magistrates. So when a prince forbids all his subjects to strike or wound any one, he does not prohibit his officers from executing that justice which is particularly committed to them. I sincerely wish that this consideration were constantly in our recollection, that nothing is done here by the temerity of men, but every thing by the authority of God who commands it, and under whose guidance we never err from the right way. For we can find no valid objection to the infliction of public vengeance, unless the justice of God be restrained from the punishment of crimes. But if it be unlawful for us to impose restraints upon him, why do we calumniate his ministers? Paul says of the magistrate, that “He beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” (h) Therefore, if princes and other governors know that nothing will be more acceptable to God than their obedience, and if they desire to approve their piety, justice, and integrity before God, let them devote themselves to this duty. This motive influenced Moses, when knowing himself to be destined to become the liberator of his people by the power of the Lord, “he slew the Egyptian;” (i) and when he punished the idolatry of the people by the slaughter of three thousand men in one day. (k) The same motive actuated David when at the close of his life he commanded his son Solomon to put to death Joab and

(g) Gen. ix. 6. Exod. xxi. 12.

(i) Exod. ii. 12.

(h) Rom. xiii. 4.

(k) Exod. xxxii. 26—28.

Shimei. (*l*) Hence also it is enumerated among the virtues of a king, to “destroy all the wicked of the land, that he may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.” (*m*) The same topic furnishes the eulogium given to Solomon: “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness.” (*n*) How did the meek and placid disposition of Moses burn with such cruelty, that after having his hands embrued in the blood of his brethren, he continue to go through the camp till three thousand were slain? How did David, who discovered such humanity all his life-time, in his last moments bequeath such a cruel injunction to his son respecting Joab; “Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace:” and respecting Shimei; “His hoar head bring down to the grave with blood.” Both Moses and David, in executing the vengeance committed to them by God, by this severity sanctified their hands, which had been defiled by their former lenity. Solomon says, “It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness; for the throne is established by righteousness.” (*o*) Again: “A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment, scattereth away all evil with his eyes.” (*p*) Again: “A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them.” (*q*) Again: “Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.” (*r*) Again: “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.” (*s*) Again: “An evil man seeketh only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.” (*t*) Again: “He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous; him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him.” (*u*) Now if it be true justice for them to pursue the wicked with a drawn sword, let them sheath the sword, and keep their hands from shedding blood, while the swords of desperadoes are drenched in murders; and they will be so far from acquiring the praise of goodness and justice by this forbearance, that they will involve

(*l*) 1 Kings ii. 5—9.(*o*) Prov. xvi. 12.(*r*) Prov. xxv. 4, 5.(*u*) Prov. xxiv. 24.(*m*) Psalm ci. 8.(*p*) Prov. xx. 8.(*s*) Prov. xvii. 15.(*n*) Psalm xlv. 7.(*q*) Prov. xx. 26.(*t*) Prov. xvii. 11.

themselves in the deepest impiety. There ought not however to be any excessive or unreasonable severity, nor ought any cause to be given for considering the tribunal as a gibbet prepared for all who are accused. For I am not an advocate for unnecessary cruelty, nor can I conceive the possibility of an equitable sentence being pronounced without mercy; of which Solomon affirms, that "mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upholden by mercy." (v) Yet it behoves the magistrate to be on his guard against both these errors; that he do not, by excessive severity, wound rather than heal; or through a superstitious affectation of clemency, fall into a mistaken humanity, which is the worst kind of cruelty, by indulging a weak and ill-judged lenity, to the detriment of multitudes. For it is a remark not without foundation, that was anciently applied to the government of Nerva, That it is bad to live under a prince who permits nothing, but much worse to live under one who permits every thing.

XI. Now as it is sometimes necessary for kings and nations to take up arms for the infliction of such public vengeance, the same reason will lead us to infer the lawfulness of wars which are undertaken for this end. For if they have been entrusted with power to preserve the tranquillity of their own territories, to suppress the seditious tumults of disturbers, to succour the victims of oppression, and to punish crimes; can they exert this power for a better purpose, than to repel the violence of him, who disturbs both the private repose of individuals and the general tranquillity of the nation; who excites insurrections, and perpetrates acts of oppression, cruelty, and every species of crime? If they ought to be the guardians and defenders of the laws, it is incumbent upon them to defeat the efforts of all by whose injustice the discipline of the laws is corrupted. And if they justly punish those robbers, whose injuries have only extended to a few persons; shall they suffer a whole district to be plundered and devastated with impunity? For there is no difference, whether he, who in a hostile manner invades, disturbs, and plunders the territory of another to which he has no right, be a king, or one of the meanest of mankind: all persons



of this description are equally to be considered as robbers, and ought to be punished as such. It is the dictate both of natural equity, and of the nature of the office, therefore, that princes are armed, not only to restrain the crimes of private individuals by judicial punishments, but also to defend the territories committed to their charge by going to war against any hostile aggression: and the Holy Spirit in many passages of Scripture declares such wars to be lawful.

XII. If it be objected, that the New Testament contains no precept or example, which proves war to be lawful to Christians: I answer, first, that the reason for waging war which existed in ancient times, is equally valid in the present age; and that, on the contrary, there is no cause to prevent princes from defending their subjects. Secondly, that no express declaration on this subject is to be expected in the writings of the apostles, whose design was, not to organise civil governments, but to describe the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Lastly, that in those very writings it is implied by the way, that no change has been made in this respect by the coming of Christ. “For,” to use the words of Augustine, “if Christian discipline condemned all wars, the soldiers who inquired respecting their salvation ought rather to have been directed to cast away their arms, and entirely to renounce the military profession; whereas the advice given them was; ‘Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.’ (w) An injunction to be content with their wages was certainly not a prohibition of the military life.” But here all magistrates ought to be very cautious, that they follow not in any respect the impulse of their passions. On the contrary, if punishments are to be inflicted, they ought not to be precipitated with anger, exasperated with hatred, or inflamed with implacable severity: they ought, as Augustine says, “to commiserate our common nature, even in him whom they punish for his crime.” Or if arms are to be resorted to against an enemy, that is, an armed robber, they ought not to seize a trivial occasion, nor even to take it when presented, unless they are driven to it by extreme necessity. For if it be our duty to exceed what was required

(w) Luke iii. 14.

by that heathen writer, who maintained that the evident object of war ought to be the restoration of peace; certainly we ought to make every other attempt before we have recourse to the decision of arms. In short, in both cases they must not suffer themselves to be carried away by any private motive, but be wholly guided by public spirit: otherwise they grossly abuse their power, which is given them, not for their own particular advantage, but for the benefit and service of others. Moreover on this right of war, depends the lawfulness of garrisons, alliances, and other civil munitions. By *garrisons*, I mean soldiers who are stationed in towns to defend the boundaries of a country. By *alliances*, I mean confederations which are made between neighbouring princes, that, if any disturbance arise in their territories, they will render each other mutual assistance, and will unite their forces together for the common resistance of the common enemies of mankind. By *civil munitions*, I mean all the provisions which are employed in the art of war.

XIII. In the last place, I think it necessary to add, that tributes and taxes are the legitimate revenues of princes; which indeed they ought principally to employ in sustaining the public expenses of their office, but which they may likewise use for the support of their domestic splendour, which is closely connected with the dignity of the government that they hold. Thus we see that David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah, and other pious kings, and likewise Joseph and Daniel, without any violation of piety, on account of the office which they filled, lived at the public expense; and we read in Ezekiel of a very ample portion of land being assigned to the kings: (x) in which passage, though the prophet is describing the spiritual kingdom of Christ, yet he borrows the model of it from the legitimate kingdoms of men. On the other hand, princes themselves ought to remember, that their finances are not so much private incomes, as the revenues of the whole people, according to the testimony of Paul, (y) and therefore cannot be lavished, or dilapidated, without manifest injustice: or rather that they are to be considered as the blood of the people, which not to spare is the most inhuman cruelty: and their various imposts and

(x) Ezek. xlviii, 21, 22.

(y) Rom. xiii, 6.

tributes ought to be regarded merely as aids of the public necessity, to burden the people with which without cause, would be tyrannical rapacity. These things give no encouragement to princes to indulge profusion and luxury, and certainly there is no need to add fuel to their passions, which of themselves are more than sufficiently inflamed: but as it is of very great importance that whatever they undertake, they attempt it with a pure conscience before God, it is necessary, in order to their avoiding vain confidence and contempt of God, that they be taught how far their rights extend. Nor is this doctrine useless to private persons, who learn from it not to pronounce rash and insolent censures on the expenses of princes, notwithstanding they exceed the limits of common life.

XIV. From the magistracy we next proceed to the laws, which are the strong nerves of civil polity, or, according to an appellation which Cicero has borrowed from Plato, the *souls of states*, without which magistracy cannot subsist, as on the other hand without magistrates laws are of no force. No observation therefore can be more correct than this, that the law is a silent magistrate, and the magistrate a speaking law. Though I have promised to shew by what laws a Christian state ought to be regulated, it will not be reasonable for any person to expect a long discussion respecting the best kind of laws; which is a subject of immense extent, and foreign from our present object. I will briefly remark however, by the way, what laws it may piously use before God, and be rightly governed by among men. And even this I would have preferred passing over in silence, if I did not know that it is a point on which many persons run into dangerous errors. For some deny that a state is well constituted, which neglects the polity of Moses, and is governed by the common laws of nations. The dangerous and seditious nature of this opinion I leave to the examination of others; it will be sufficient for me to have evinced it to be false and foolish. Now it is necessary to observe that common distinction, which distributes all the laws of God promulgated by Moses into moral, ceremonial, and judicial: and these different kinds of laws are to be distinctly examined, that we may ascertain what belongs to us, and what does not. Nor let any one be embarrassed by this scruple, that



even the ceremonial and judicial precepts are included in the moral. For the ancients, who first made this distinction, were not ignorant that these two kinds of precepts related to the conduct of moral agents; yet as they might be changed and abrogated without affecting the morality of actions, therefore they did not call them moral precepts. They particularly applied this appellation to those precepts without which there can be no real purity of morals, nor any permanent rule of a holy life.

XV. The moral law, therefore, with which I shall begin, being comprised in two leading articles, of which one simply commands us to worship God with pure faith and piety, and the other enjoins us to embrace men with sincere love; this law, I say, is the true and eternal rule of righteousness, prescribed to men of all ages and nations, who wish to conform their lives to the will of God. For this is his eternal and immutable will, that he himself be worshipped by us all, and that we mutually love one another. The ceremonial law was the pupillage of the Jews, with which it pleased the Lord to exercise that people during a state resembling childhood, till that “fulness of the time” should come, (z) when he would fully manifest his wisdom to the world, and would exhibit the reality of those things which were then adumbrated in figures. The judicial law, given to them as a political constitution, taught them certain rules of equity and justice, by which they might conduct themselves in a harmless and peaceable manner towards each other. And as that exercise of ceremonies properly related to the doctrine of piety, inasmuch as it kept the Jewish Church in the worship and service of God, which is the first article of the moral law, and yet was distinct from piety itself: so these judicial regulations, though they had no other end than the preservation of that love which is enjoined in the eternal law of God, yet had something which distinguished them from that precept itself. As the ceremonies therefore might be abrogated without any violation or injury of piety: so the precepts and duties of love remain of perpetual obligation, notwithstanding the abolition of all these judicial

(z) Gal. iii. 24. iv. 4.

ordinances. If this be true, certainly all nations are left at liberty to enact such laws as they shall find to be respectively expedient for them: provided they be framed according to that perpetual rule of love, so that, though they vary in form, they may have the same end. For those barbarous and savage laws, which rewarded theft and permitted promiscuous concubinage, with others still more vile, execrable, and absurd, I am very far from thinking ought to be considered as laws; since they are not only violations of all righteousness, but outrages against humanity itself.

XVI. What I have said will be more clearly understood, if in all laws we properly consider these two things; the constitution of the law, and its equity, on the reason of which the constitution itself is founded and rests. Equity, being natural, is the same to all mankind; and consequently all laws, on every subject, ought to have the same equity for their end. Particular enactments and regulations, being connected with circumstances and partly dependent upon them, may be different in different cases, without any impropriety, provided they are all equally directed to the same object of equity. Now as it is certain that the law of God, which we call the moral law, is no other than a declaration of natural law, and of that conscience which has been engraven by God on the minds of men, the whole rule of this equity of which we now speak is prescribed in it. This equity therefore must alone be the scope and rule and end of all laws. Whatever laws shall be framed according to that rule, directed to that object, and limited to that end, there is no reason why we should censure them, however they may differ from the Jewish law, or from each other. The law of God forbids theft. What punishment was enacted for thieves among the Jews, may be seen in the book of Exodus. (a) The most ancient laws of other nations punished theft by requiring a compensation of double the value. Subsequent laws made a distinction between open and secret theft. Some proceeded to banishment, some to flagellation, and some to the punishment of death. False witness was punished, among the Jews, with the same punishment as such testimony would have caused to

(a) Exod. xxii. 1, &c.

be inflicted on the person against whom it was given : (b) in some countries it was punished with infamy, in others with hanging, in others with crucifixion. All laws agree in punishing murder with death, though in several different forms. The punishments of adulterers in different countries have been attended with different degrees of severity. Yet we see how amidst this diversity they are all directed to the same end. For they all agree in denouncing punishment against those crimes which are condemned by the eternal law of God ; such as murders, thefts, adulteries, false testimonies : though there is not a uniformity in the mode of punishment ; and indeed this is neither necessary, nor even expedient. One country, if it did not inflict the most exemplary vengeance upon murderers, would soon be ruined by murders and robberies. One age requires the severity of punishments to be increased. If a country be disturbed by any civil commotion, the evils which generally arise from it must be corrected by new edicts. In time of war, all humanity would be forgotten amidst the din of arms, if men were not awed by more than a common dread of punishment. During famine and pestilence, unless greater severity be employed, every thing will fall into ruin. One nation is more prone than others to some particular vice, unless it be most rigidly restrained. What malignity and envy against the public good will be betrayed by him who shall take offence at such diversity, which is best adapted to secure the observance of the law of God ? For the objection made by some, that it is an insult to the law of God given by Moses, when it is abrogated, and other laws are preferred to it, is without any foundation : for neither are other laws preferred to it, when they are more approved, not on a simple comparison, but on account of the circumstances of time, place, and nation ; nor do we abrogate that which was never given to us. For the Lord gave not that law by the hand of Moses to be promulgated among all nations, and to be universally binding ; but after having taken the Jewish nation into his special charge, patronage, and protection, he was pleased to become, in a peculiar manner, their legislator ; and, as became a wise legislator,

(b) Deut. xix. 18, 19.



in all the laws which he gave them, he had a special regard to their peculiar circumstances.

XVII. It now remains for us, as we proposed, in the last place, to examine, what advantage the common society of Christians derives from laws, judgments, and magistrates: with which is connected another question; what honour private persons ought to render to magistrates, and how far their obedience ought to extend. Many persons suppose the office of magistracy to be of no use among Christians, for that they cannot consistently with piety apply for their assistance, because they are forbidden to have recourse to revenge or litigation. But as Paul, on the contrary, clearly testifies that the magistrate is "the minister of God to us for good;" (c) we understand from this, that he is divinely appointed in order that we may be defended by his power and protection against the malice and injuries of wicked men, and may lead peaceable and secure lives. But if it be in vain that he is given to us by the Lord for our protection, unless it be lawful for us to avail ourselves of such an advantage, it clearly follows that we may appeal to him, and apply for his aid, without any violation of piety. But here I have to do with two sorts of persons: for there are multitudes inflamed with such a rage for litigation, that they never have peace in themselves, unless they are in contention with others: and they commence their lawsuits with a mortal bitterness of animosities, and with an infuriated cupidity of revenge and injury, and pursue them with an implacable obstinacy even to the ruin of their adversary. At the same time, that they may not be thought to do any thing wrong, they defend this perverseness under the pretext of seeking justice. But though it is allowable for a man to endeavour to obtain justice from his neighbour by a judicial process, he is not therefore at liberty to hate him, or to cherish a desire to hurt him, or to persecute him without mercy.

XVIII. Let such persons therefore understand, that judicial processes are lawful to those who use them rightly: and that the right use, both for the plaintiff and for the defendant, is this. First, if the plaintiff, being injured either in his person or in

(c) Rom. xiii. 4.

his property, has recourse to the protection of the magistrate, states his complaint, makes a just and equitable claim, but without any desire of injury or revenge, without any asperity or hatred, without any ardour for contention, but rather prepared to wave his right, and to sustain some disadvantage, than to cherish enmity against his adversary. Secondly, if the defendant, being summoned, appears on the day appointed, and defends his cause by the best arguments in his power, without any bitterness, but with the simple desire of maintaining his just right. On the contrary, when their minds are filled with malevolence, corrupted with envy, incensed with wrath, stimulated with revenge, or inflamed with the fervour of contention, so as to diminish their charity, all the proceedings of the justest cause are inevitably wicked. For it ought to be an established maxim with all Christians, that however just a cause may be, no lawsuit can ever be carried on in a proper manner by any man, who does not feel as much benevolence and affection towards his adversary, as if the business in dispute had already been settled and terminated by an amicable adjustment. Some perhaps will object, that such moderation in lawsuits is far from being ever practised, and that if one instance of it were to be found, it would be regarded as a prodigy. I confess, indeed, that in the corruption of these times, the example of an upright litigator is very rare; but the thing itself ceases not to be good and pure, if it be not defiled by an adventitious evil. But when we hear that the assistance of the magistrate is a holy gift of God, it behoves us to use the more assiduous caution that it be not contaminated by our guilt.

XIX. Those who positively condemn all controversies at law, ought to understand that they thereby reject a holy ordinance of God, and a gift of the number of those which may be "pure to the pure:" unless they mean to charge Paul with a crime, who repelled the calumnies of his accusers, exposing their subtlety and malice; who before his judges asserted his right to the privileges of a Roman citizen; and who, when he found it necessary, appealed from an unjust governor to the tribunal of Cæsar. It is no objection to this, that all Christians are forbidden the desire of revenge, which we

also wish to banish to the greatest distance from all Christian judicatures. For in a civil cause, no man proceeds in the right way, who does not, with innocent simplicity, commit his cause to the judge as to a public guardian, without the least thought of a mutual retaliation of evil, which is the passion of revenge. And in any more important or criminal action, we require the accuser to be one who goes into the court, influenced by no desire of revenge, affected by no resentment of private injury, and having no other motive than to resist the attempts of a mischievous man, that he may not injure the public. But if a vindictive spirit be excluded, no offence is committed against that precept by which revenge is forbidden to Christians. It may probably be objected, that they are not only forbidden to desire revenge, but are also commanded to wait for the hand of the Lord, who promises that he will assist and revenge the afflicted and oppressed, and therefore that those who seek the interference of the magistrate on behalf of themselves or others, anticipate all that vengeance of the celestial protector. But this is very far from the truth. For the vengeance of the magistrate is to be considered, not as the vengeance of man, but of God, which, according to the testimony of Paul, he exercises by the ministry of men for our good.

XX. Nor do we any more oppose the prohibition and injunction of Christ: "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also: and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." (*d*) In this passage indeed he requires the minds of his servants to be so far from cherishing a desire of retaliation, as rather to suffer the repetition of an injury against themselves than to wish to revenge it: nor do we dissuade them from this patience. For it truly behoves Christians to be a people, as it were, formed to bear injuries and reproaches, exposed to the iniquity, impostures, and ridicule of the worst of mankind: and not only so, but they ought to be patient under all these evils; that is to say, so calm and composed in their minds, that after having suffered

(*d*) Matt. v. 39, 40.



one affliction they may prepare themselves for another, expecting nothing all their lifetime but to bear a perpetual cross. At the same time they are required to bless and pray for them from whom they receive curses, to do good to them from whom they experience injuries, (e) and to aim at that which constitutes their only victory, to "overcome evil with good." (f) With this disposition, they will not demand "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," as the Pharisees taught their disciples to desire revenge; but, as we are instructed by Christ, they will suffer injuries in their persons and property in such a manner as to be ready to forgive them as soon as they are committed. (g) Yet this equanimity and moderation will be no obstacle, but that, without any breach of friendship towards their enemies, they may avail themselves of the assistance of the magistrate for the preservation of their property; or from zeal for the public good may bring a pestilent offender to justice, though they know he can only be punished with death. For it is very correctly explained by Augustine that the end of all these precepts is, "that a just and pious man should be ready to bear with patience the wickedness of those whom he desires to become good; rather in order that the number of the good may increase, not that with similar wickedness he may himself join the number of the evil: and in the next place, that they relate to the internal affection of the heart more than to the external actions; in order that in the secrecy of our minds we may feel patience and benevolence, but in our outward conduct may do that which we see tends to the advantage of those to whom we ought to feel benevolent affections."

XXI. The objection which is frequently alleged, that lawsuits are universally condemned by Paul, has no foundation in truth. (h) It may be easily understood from his words that in the Church of the Corinthians there was an immoderate rage for litigation, so that they exposed the gospel of Christ, and all the religion which they professed, to the cavils and reproaches of the impious. The first thing which Paul reprehended in them was, that the intemperance of their dissensions

(e) Matt. v. 44.

(f) Rom. xii. 21.

(g) Matt. v. 38-40.

(h) 1 Cor. vi. 1-8.

brought the gospel into discredit among unbelievers. And the next thing was, that they had such altercations among them, brethren with brethren: for they were so far from bearing an injury, that they coveted each others' property and molested and injured one another without any provocation. It was against that rage for litigation, therefore, that he inveighed, and not absolutely against all controversies. But he pronounces it to be altogether a vice or a weakness that they did not suffer the injury or loss of their property rather than to proceed to contentions for the preservation of it: when they were so disturbed or exasperated at every loss or injury, that they had recourse to lawsuits on the most trivial occasions, he argues that this proved their minds to be too irritable, and not sufficiently patient. It is certainly incumbent on Christians, in all cases, to prefer a concession of their right to an entrance on a lawsuit; from which they can scarcely come out without a mind exasperated and inflamed with enmity to their brother. But when one sees that, without any breach of charity, he may defend his property, the loss of which would be a serious injury to him; if he do it, he commits no offence against that sentence of Paul. In a word, as we have observed at the beginning, charity will give every one the best counsel; for whatever litigations are undertaken without charity, or are carried to a degree inconsistent with it, we conclude them beyond all controversy to be unjust and wicked.

XXII. The first duty of subjects towards their magistrates is to entertain the most honourable sentiments of their function, which they know to be a jurisdiction delegated to them from God, and on that account to esteem and reverence them as God's ministers and vicegerents. For there are some persons to be found, who shew themselves very obedient to their magistrates, and have not the least wish that there were no magistrates for them to obey, because they know them to be so necessary to the public good; but who, nevertheless, consider the magistrates themselves as no other than necessary evils. But something more than this is required of us by Peter, when he commands us to "honour the king?" (i) and by

(i) 1 Peter ii. 17.

Solomon when he says, "Fear thou the Lord and the king:" (*k*) for Peter, under the term *honour*, comprehends a sincere and candid esteem; and Solomon, by connecting the king with the Lord, attributes to him a kind of sacred veneration and dignity. It is also a remarkable commendation of magistrates which is given by Paul, when he says, that we "must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake:" (*l*) by which he means, that subjects ought to be induced to submit to princes and governors, not merely from a dread of their power, as persons are accustomed to yield to an armed enemy, who they know will immediately take vengeance upon them if they resist; but because the obedience which is rendered to princes and magistrates is rendered to God, from whom they have received their authority. I am not speaking of the persons, as if the mask of dignity ought to palliate or excuse folly, ignorance, or cruelty, and conduct the most nefarious and flagitious, and so to acquire for vices the praise due to virtues: but I affirm that the station itself is worthy of honour and reverence: so that, whoever our governors are, they ought to possess our esteem and veneration on account of the office which they fill.

XXIII. Hence follows another duty, that, with minds disposed to honour and reverence magistrates, subjects approve their obedience to them, in submitting to their edicts, in paying taxes, in discharging public duties and bearing burdens which relate to the common defence, and in fulfilling all their other commands. Paul says to the Romans, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." (*m*) He writes to Titus; "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." (*n*) Peter exhorts; "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." (*o*) Moreover, that subjects may testify

(*k*) Prov. xxiv. 21.

(*m*) Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

(*o*) 1 Peter ii. 13, 14.

(*l*) Rom. xiii. 5.

(*n*) Titus iii. 1.



that theirs is not a hypocritical but a sincere and cordial submission, Paul teaches, that they ought to pray to God for the safety and prosperity of those under whose government they live. "I exhort," he says, "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." (*p*) Here let no man deceive himself. For as it is impossible to resist the magistrate without, at the same time, resisting God himself; though an unarmed magistrate may seem to be despised with impunity, yet God is armed to inflict exemplary vengeance on the contempt offered to himself. Under this obedience I also include the moderation which private persons ought to prescribe to themselves in relation to public affairs, that they do not, without being called upon, intermeddle with affairs of state, or rashly intrude themselves into the office of magistrates, or undertake any thing of a public nature. If there be any thing in the public administration which requires to be corrected, let them not raise any tumults, or take the business into their own hands, which ought to be all bound in this respect, but let them refer it to the cognizance of the magistrate, who is alone authorised to regulate the concerns of the public. I mean, that they ought to attempt nothing without being commanded: for when they have the command of a governor, then they also are invested with public authority. For, as we are accustomed to call the counsellors of a prince *his eyes and ears*: so they may not unaptly be called *his hands* whom he has commissioned to execute any of his commands.

XXIV. Now as we have hitherto described a magistrate who truly answers to his title; who is the father of his country, and, as the poet calls him, the pastor of his people, the guardian of peace, the protector of justice, the avenger of innocence; he would justly be deemed insane who disapproved of such a government. But, as it has happened in almost all ages, that some princes, regardless of every thing to which they ought to have directed their attention and provision, give themselves up to their pleasures in indolent exemption from every care; others,

absorbed in their own interest, expose to sale all laws, privileges, rights, and judgments; others plunder the public of wealth, which they afterwards lavish in mad prodigality; others commit flagrant outrages, pillaging houses, violating virgins and matrons, and murdering infants: many persons cannot be persuaded that such ought to be acknowledged as princes, whom, as far as possible, they ought to obey. For in such enormities, and actions so completely incompatible, not only with the office of a magistrate, but with the duty of every man, they discover no appearance of the image of God, which ought to be conspicuous in a magistrate; while they perceive no vestige of that minister of God who is "not a terror to good works but to the evil," who is sent "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well;" nor recognize that governor, whose dignity and authority the Scripture recommends to us. And certainly the minds of men have always been naturally disposed to hate and execrate tyrants as much as to love and reverence legitimate kings.

XXV. But, if we direct our attention to the word of God, it will carry us much further; even to submit to the government, not only of those princes who discharge their duty to us with becoming integrity and fidelity, but of all who possess the sovereignty, even though they perform none of the duties of their function. For though the Lord testifies that the magistrate is an eminent gift of his liberality to preserve the safety of men, and prescribes to magistrates themselves the extent of their duty; yet he, at the same time, declares, that whatever be their characters, they have their government only from him; that those who govern for the public good are true specimens and mirrors of his beneficence; and that those who rule in an unjust and tyrannical manner are raised up by him to punish the iniquity of the people; that all equally possess that sacred majesty which he hath invested with legitimate authority. I will not proceed any further till I have subjoined a few testimonies in proof of this point. It is unnecessary, however, to labour much to evince an impious king to be a judgment of God's wrath upon the world, as I have no expectation that any one will deny it: and in this we say no more of a king than of any other robber who plunders our property; or adul-

terer who violates our bed; or assassin who attempts to murder us; since the Scripture enumerates all these calamities among the curses inflicted by God. But let us rather insist on the proof of that which the minds of men do not so easily admit; that a man of the worst character, and most undeserving of all honour, who holds the sovereign power, really possesses that eminent and divine authority, which the Lord hath given by his word to the ministers of his justice and judgment; and, therefore, that he ought to be regarded by his subjects with the same reverence and esteem which they would shew to the best of kings, if such an one were granted to them.

XXVI. In the first place, I request my readers to observe and consider with attention, what is so frequently and justly mentioned in the Scriptures, the providence of God, and peculiar dispensation of God in distributing kingdoms and appointing whom he pleases to be kings. Daniel says; "God changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings and setteth up kings." (q) Again; "That the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." (r) Passages of this kind abound throughout the Scriptures, but particularly in this prophecy. Now the character of Nebuchadnezzar, who conquered Jerusalem, is sufficiently known, that he was an invader and depopulator of the territories of others. Yet by the mouth of Ezekiel the Lord declares that ~~he~~ had given him the land of Egypt; as a reward for the service which he had performed in devastating Tyre. (s) And Daniel said to him; "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory: and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven, hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over all." (t) Again; to his grandson Belshazzar Daniel said, "The most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him." (v) When we

(q) Dan. ii. 21.

(r) Dan. iv. 17.

(s) Ezek. xxix. 18—20.

(t) Dan. ii. 37, 38.

(v) Dan. v. 18, 19.



hear that Nebuchadnezzar was placed on the throne by God, let us, at the same time, call to mind the celestial edicts which command us to fear and honour the king; and we shall not hesitate to regard the most iniquitous tyrant with the honour due to the station in which the Lord hath deigned to place him. When Samuel denounced to the children of Israel what treatment they would receive from their kings, he said; "This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your fields, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants." (w) Certainly the kings would not do all this as a matter of right, for they were excellently instructed by the law to observe all moderation: but it was called a right with respect to the people who were bound to obey and were not at liberty to resist it. It was just as if Samuel had said; The cupidity of your kings will proceed to all these outrages, which it will not be your province to restrain; nothing will remain for you, but to receive their commands and to obey them.

XXVII. But the most remarkable and memorable passage of all is in the Prophecy of Jeremiah, which, though it is rather long, I shall readily quote, because it most clearly decides the whole question: "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son,

(w) 1 Sam. viii. 11—17.

until the very time of his land come. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same king of Babylon, that nation will I punish with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence. Therefore serve the king of Babylon, and live.” (x) We see what great obedience and honour the Lord required to be rendered to that pestilent and cruel tyrant, for no other reason than because he possessed the kingdom: and it was by the heavenly decree that he was seated on the throne of the kingdom, and exalted to that regal majesty, which it was not lawful to violate. If we have this constantly present to our eyes and impressed upon our hearts, that the most iniquitous kings are placed on their thrones by the same decree by which the authority of all kings is established, those seditious thoughts will never enter our minds, that a king is to be treated according to his merits, and that it is not reasonable for us to be subject to a king who does not on his part perform towards us those duties which his office requires.

XXVIII. In vain will any one object that this was a special command given to the Israelites. For we must observe the reason upon which the Lord founds it. He says, “I have given these lands to Nebuchadnezzar; therefore serve him, and live.” To whomsoever, therefore, a kingdom shall evidently be given, we have no room to doubt that subjection is due to him. And as soon as he exalts any person to royal dignity, he gives us a declaration of his pleasure that he shall reign. The Scripture contains general testimonies on this subject. Solomon says; “For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof.” (y) Job says; “He looseth the bonds of kings,” or divesteth them of their power; “and girdeth their loins with a girdle,” (z) or restoreth them to their former dignity. This being admitted, nothing remains for us but to serve and live. The Prophet Jeremiah likewise records another command of the Lord to his people: “Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace of it ye shall have peace.” (a) Here, we see, the Israelites, after having been

(x) Jer. xxvii. 5—9. 12.

(y) Prov. xxviii. 2.

(z) Job. xii. 18.

(a) Jer. xxix. 7.

stripped of all their property, torn from their habitations, driven into exile, and forced into a miserable servitude, were commanded to pray for the prosperity of their conqueror; not in the same manner in which we are all commanded to pray for our persecutors; but that his kingdom might be preserved in safety and tranquillity, and that they might live in prosperity under him. Thus David, after having been already designated as king by the ordination of God, and anointed with his holy oil, though he was unjustly persecuted by Saul, without having given him any cause of offence, nevertheless accounted the person of his pursuer sacred, because the Lord had consecrated it by the royal dignity. "And he said, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." Again; "Mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my Lord; for he is the Lord's anointed." (b) Again; "Who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless? As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed." (c)

XXIX. Finally, we owe these sentiments of affection and reverence to all our rulers, whatever their characters may be: which we the more frequently repeat, that we may learn not to scrutinize the persons themselves, but may be satisfied with knowing that they are invested by the will of the Lord with that function, upon which he hath impressed an inviolable majesty. But it will be said, that rulers owe mutual duties to their subjects. That I have already confessed. But he who infers from this that obedience ought to be rendered to none but just rulers, is a very bad reasoner. For husbands owe mutual duties to their wives, and parents to their children. Now, if husbands and parents violate their obligations, if parents conduct themselves with discouraging severity and fastidious moroseness towards their children, whom they are forbidden to provoke to wrath: (d) if husbands despise and vex their wives,

(b) 1 Sam. xxiv. 6, 11.

(c) 1 Sam. xxvi. 9—11.

(d) Ephes. vi. 1. Col. iii. 21.



whom they are commanded to love and to spare as the weaker vessels; (e) does it follow that children should be less obedient to their parents; or wives to their husbands? They are still subject, even to those who are wicked and unkind. As it is incumbent on all, not to inquire into the duties of one another, but to confine their attention respectively to their own; this consideration ought particularly to be regarded by those who are subject to the authority of others. Wherefore, if we are inhumanly harassed by a cruel prince, if we are rapaciously plundered by an avaricious or luxurious one, if we are neglected by an indolent one, or if we are persecuted, on account of piety, by an impious and sacrilegious one, let us first call to mind our transgressions against God, which he undoubtedly chastises by these scourges. Thus our impatience will be restrained by humility. Let us, in the next place, consider that it is not our province to remedy these evils; and that nothing remains for us, but to implore the aid of the Lord, in whose hand are the hearts of kings and the revolutions of kingdoms. It is "God" who "standeth in the congregation of the mighty," and "judgeth among the gods;" (f) whose presence shall confound and crush all kings and judges of the earth who shall not have kissed his Son; (g) "that decree unrighteous decrees, to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless." (h)

XXX. And here is displayed his wonderful goodness, and power, and providence: for sometimes he raises up some of his servants as public avengers, and arms them with his commission to punish unrighteous domination, and to deliver from their distressing calamities a people who have been unjustly oppressed: sometimes he accomplishes this end by the fury of men who meditate and attempt something altogether different. Thus he liberated the people of Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh by Moses: from the oppression of Chusan by Othniel; and from other yokes by other kings and judges. Thus he subdued the pride of Tyre by the Egyptians; the insolence of the Egyptians, by the Assyrians; the haughtiness of the

(e) Ephes. v. 25. 1 Pet. iii. 7.

(g) Psalm ii. 10—12.

(f) Psalm lxxxii. 1.

(h) Isaiah x. 1, 2.

Assyrians, by the Chaldeans; the confidence of Babylon, by the Medes and Persians, after Cyrus had subjugated the Medes. The ingratitude of the kings of Israel and Judah, and their impious rebellion, notwithstanding his numerous favours, he repressed and punished sometimes by the Assyrians, sometimes by the Babylonians. These were all the executioners of his vengeance, but not all in the same manner. The former, when they were called forth to the performance of such acts by a legitimate commission from God, in taking arms against kings, were not chargeable with the least violation of that majesty with which kings are invested by the ordination of God; but being armed with authority from heaven, they punished an inferior power by a superior one, as it is lawful for kings to punish their inferior officers. The latter, though they were guided by the hand of God in such directions as he pleased, and performed his work without being conscious of it, nevertheless contemplated in their hearts nothing but evil.

XXXI. But whatever opinion be formed of the acts of men, yet the Lord equally executed his work by them, when he broke the sanguinary sceptres of insolent kings, and overturned tyrannical governments. Let princes hear and fear. But, in the mean while, it behoves us to use the greatest caution, that we do not despise or violate that authority of magistrates, which is entitled to the greatest veneration, which God hath established by the most solemn commands, even though it reside in those who are most unworthy of it, and who, as far as in them lies, pollute it by their iniquity. For though the correction of tyrannical domination is the vengeance of God, we are not, therefore, to conclude that it is committed to us, who have received no other command than to obey and suffer. This observation I always apply to private persons. For if there be, in the present day, any magistrates appointed for the protection of the people and the moderation of the power of kings, such as were, in ancient times, the Ephori who were a check upon the kings among the Lacedæmonians, or the popular tribunes upon the consuls among the Romans, or the Demarchi upon the senate among the Athenians; or with power such as perhaps is now possessed by the three estates in every kingdom when they are assembled; I am so

far from prohibiting them in the discharge of their duty to oppose the violence or cruelty of kings, that I affirm, that if they connive at kings in their oppression of their people, such forbearance involves the most nefarious perfidy, because they fraudulently betray the liberty of the people, of which they know that they have been appointed protectors by the ordination of God.

XXXII. But in the obedience which we have shewn to be due to the authority of governors, it is always necessary to make one exception, and that is entitled to our first attention, that it do not seduce us from obedience to him, to whose will the desires of all kings ought to be subject, to whose decrees all their commands ought to yield, to whose majesty all their sceptres ought to submit. And, indeed, how proposterous it would be for us, with a view to satisfy men, to incur the displeasure of him on whose account we yield obedience to men! The Lord, therefore, is the King of kings; who, when he hath opened his sacred mouth, is to be heard alone, above all, for all, and before all: in the next place, we are subject to those men who preside over us; but no otherwise than in him. If they command any thing against him, it ought not to have the least attention; nor, in this case, ought we to pay any regard to all that dignity attached to magistrates; to which no injury is done when it is subjected to the unrivalled and supreme power of God. On this principle Daniel denied that he had committed any crime against the king in disobeying his impious decree; (*i*) because the king had exceeded the limits of his office, and had not only done an injury to men, but, by raising his arm against God, had degraded his own authority. On the other hand, the Israelites are condemned for having been too submissive to the impious edict of their king. For when Jeroboam had made his golden calves, in compliance with his will, they deserted the temple of God and revolted to new superstitions. Their posterity conformed to the decrees of their idolatrous kings with the same facility. The prophet severely condemns them for having “willingly walked after the commandment:” (*k*) so far is any praise from being due to the pre-

(*i*) Dan. vi. 22.

(*k*) Hos. v. 11.



text of humility, with which courtly flatterers excuse themselves and deceive the unwary, when they deny that it is lawful for them to refuse compliance with any command of their kings: as if God had resigned his right to mortal men when he made them rulers of mankind; or as if earthly power were diminished by being subordinated to its author, before whom even the principalities of heaven tremble with awe. I know what great and present danger awaits this constancy, for kings cannot bear to be disregarded without the greatest indignation; and “the wrath of a king,” says Solomon, “is as messengers of death.” (l) But since this edict has been proclaimed by that celestial herald, Peter, “We ought to obey God rather than men:” (m) let us console ourselves with this thought, that we truly perform the obedience which God requires of us, when we suffer any thing rather than deviate from piety. And that our hearts may not fail us, Paul stimulates us with another consideration; that Christ has redeemed us at the immense price which our redemption cost him, that we may not be submissive to the corrupt desires of men, much less be slaves to their impiety. (n)

(l) Prov. xvi. 14

(m) Acts v. 29.

(n) 1 Cor. vii. 23.

# INDEX

## OF THE

### PRINCIPAL MATTERS.

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*The first number indicates the Book; the second the Chapter.*

---

#### A.

- A**DAM's fall, the cause of the curse inflicted on all mankind, and of their degeneracy from their primitive condition, ii. 1.  
Angels, their creation, nature, names, and offices, i. 14.  
Articles of faith, power of the Church relating to them, iv. 8, 9.  
Ascension of Christ, i. 15.

#### B.

- Baptism, a sacrament; its institution, nature, administration, and uses, iv. 15.  
—— of infants perfectly consistent with the institution of Christ and the nature of the sign, iv. 16.

#### C.

- Celibacy of priests, iv. 12.  
—— of monks and nuns, iv. 13.  
Christ proved to be God, i. 13.  
—— necessity of his becoming man in order to fulfil the office of a Mediator, ii. 12.  
—— his assumption of real humanity, ii. 13.  
—— the union of the two natures constituting his one person, ii. 14.  
—— the only Redeemer of lost man, ii. 6.  
—— the consideration of his three offices, prophetic, regal, and sacerdotal, necessary to our knowing the end of his mission from the Father, and the benefits he confers on us, ii. 15.  
—— his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven to accomplish our salvation, ii. 16.  
—— truly and properly said to have merited the grace of God and salvation for us, ii. 17.

- Christ imperfectly revealed to the Jews under the law, ii. 7, 9.  
 — clearly revealed only in the gospel, ii. 9.  
 Christian liberty, its nature and advantages, iii. 19.  
 Christian life, scriptural arguments and exhortations to it, iii. 6.  
 — summary of it, iii. 7.  
 Church, the necessity of our union with the true Church, iv. 1.  
 — true and false compared and distinguished, iv. 2.  
 — teachers and ministers of the Church, their election and office, iv. 3.  
 — power of the Church, relating to articles of faith, iv. 8, 9.  
 — in making laws, iv. 10.  
 — in jurisdiction, iv. 11.  
 — discipline of the church; censures and excommunication, iv. 12.  
 — state of the ancient Church, and the mode of government practised before the papacy, iv. 4.  
 — ancient form of its government entirely subverted by the papal tyranny, iv. 5.  
 Confession, auricular, iii. 4.  
 — true, iii. 4.  
 Confirmation, papal, iv. 19.  
 Conscience, its nature and obligations, iii. 19.  
 Councils, their authority, iv. 9.  
 Creation—of the world—of angels—this clearly distinguishes the true God from all fictitious deities, i. 14.  
 Cross, bearing of, a branch of self-denial, iii. 8.

## D.

- Death of Christ, ii. 15.  
 Depravity, human, total, ii. 3.  
 Descent of Christ into hell, ii. 16.  
 Devils, their existence, power, subtlety, malignity, i. 14.  
 Discipline of the Church, iv. 12.

## E.

- Election, eternal, or God's predestination of some to salvation and of others to destruction, iii. 21.  
 — testimonies of Scripture in confirmation of this doctrine, iii. 22.  
 — a refutation of the calumnies generally, but unjustly, urged against this doctrine, iii. 23.  
 — confirmed by the divine call, iii. 24.



Excommunication, iv. 12.

Extreme unction, iv. 19.

## F.

Faith defined, and its properties described, iii. 2.

—— justification by faith, iii. 11.

—— prayer its principal exercise, iii. 20.

Fanaticism of discarding the Scripture, under the pretence of resorting to immediate revelations, subversive of every principle of piety, i. 9.

Fasting, its use and abuse, iv. 12.

Free-will lost by the fall; man in his present state miserably enslaved, ii. 2.

—— a refutation of the objections commonly urged in support of free-will, ii. 5.

## G.

God truly known only from the Scriptures, i. 6.

—— what kind of a being God is; exclusively opposed in the Scripture to all the heathen deities, i. 10.

—— contradistinguished from idols as the supreme and sole object of worship, i. 12.

—— ascription of a visible form to God unlawful, and all idolatry a defection from the true God, i. 11.

—— the creator of the universe, i. 14.

—— his preservation and support of the world by his power, and his government of every part of it by his providence, i. 16.

—— the proper use and advantages of this doctrine, i. 17.

—— God's operation in the hearts of men, ii. 4.

—— his use of the agency of the wicked, without the least stain of his perfect purity, i. 18.

—— one divine essence containing three persons, i. 13.

Gospel and law compared and distinguished, ii. 9, 10, 11.

Government of the Church, iv. 3, 4, 5.

—— civil; its nature, dignity, and advantages, iv. 20.

## H.

Holy Spirit proved to be God, i. 13.

—— his testimony requisite to the confirmation of the Scripture and the establishment of its authority, i. 7.

—— his secret and special operation necessary to our enjoyment of Christ and all his benefits; this operation the foundation of faith, newness of life, and all holy exercises, iii. 1.

Holy Spirit, the sin against, iii. 3.

Humility of the faithful, iii. 12.

# I.

Idolatry, a defection from the true God ; all worship of images idolatry, i. 11.

Image of God in man, i. 15.

Imposition of hands, iv. 15.

Indulgences and pardons, iii. 5.

Intercession of saints, iii. 20.

# J.

Judgment, last, iii. 25.

Jurisdiction of the Church, iv. 11.

Justification by faith; the name and thing defined, iii. 11.

———— a consideration of the divine tribunal necessary to a serious conviction of gratuitous justification, iii. 12.

———— things necessary to be observed in gratuitous justification, iii. 13.

———— commencement and continual progress of justification, iii. 14.

———— boasting of the merit of works equally subversive of God's glory in gratuitous justification and of the certainty of salvation, iii. 15.

———— a refutation of the injurious calumnies of the Papists against the doctrine here maintained, iii. 16.

———— the promise of a reward no argument for justification by works, iii. 17.

# K.

Kingdom of Christ, ii. 15.

Knowledge of Christ, imperfect under the law, ii. 7, 9.

———— clearly unfolded under the gospel, ii. 9.

———— of God connected with the knowledge of ourselves, i. 1.

———— nature and tendency of it, i. 2.

———— naturally implanted in the human mind, i. 3.

———— extinguished or corrupted, partly by ignorance, partly by wickedness, i. 4.

———— conspicuous in the formation and government of the world, i. 5.

———— effectually attained only from the Scripture, i. 6.

# L.

Law of Moses; its office, use, and end, ii. 7.

- Laws given to the Jews; moral, ceremonial, and judicial, iv. 20.  
 Law, moral; an exposition of, ii. 8.  
 Law and gospel, compared and distinguished, ii. 9, 10, 11.  
 Laws, ecclesiastical, iv. 10.  
 — civil and political, iv. 20.  
 Liberty, Christian, iii. 19.  
 Life, Christian, iii. 6, 7, 8.  
 — present, and its supports, right use of, iii. 10.  
 — future, meditation on, iii. 9.  
 Lord's Prayer, exposition of, iii. 20.  
 Lord's Supper, its institution, nature, and advantages, iii. 17.  
 ————— not only profaned, but annihilated by the papal mass,  
 iii. 18.

## M.

- Man, his state at his creation, the faculties of his soul, the divine image, free-will, and the original purity of his nature, i. 15.  
 — in his present state, despoiled of freedom of will, and subjected to a miserable slavery, ii. 2.  
 — every thing that proceeds from his corrupt nature worthy of condemnation, ii. 3.  
 — his mind naturally furnished with the knowledge of God, i. 3.  
 — the knowledge of God in the human mind extinguished or corrupted by ignorance and wickedness, i. 4.  
 Magistracy, iv. 20.  
 Marriage, ii. 8.  
 Matrimony, falsely called a sacrament, iv. 19.  
 Mass, the papal, not only a sacrilegious profanation of the Lord's Supper, but a total annihilation of it, iv. 18.  
 Mediator. *See* Christ, ii. 14.  
 Merit of Christ, ii. 17.  
 — of works disproved, iii. 15, 18.  
 Monks iv. 13.

## N.

- Neighbour, love of our, ii. 8.  
 Nuns, iv. 13.

## O.

- Oaths, ii. 8.  
 Offences given and taken: what to be avoided, iii. 19.  
 Orders, ecclesiastical, no sacrament, iv. 19.  
 Original sin, the doctrine of, ii. 1.



## P.

Pædobaptism. *See* Baptism, iv. 16.

Papacy, its entire subversion of the ancient form of ecclesiastical government, iv. 5.

—— its rise and progress to its present eminence attended with the loss of liberty to the Church, and the ruin of all moderation, iv. 7.

—— its licentious perversion of the power of the Church respecting articles of faith, to the corruption of all purity of doctrine, iv. 8.

—— its sophistry and jargon concerning repentance utterly inconsistent with the gospel, iii. 4.

—— its corrupt tenets respecting indulgences and purgatory, iii. 5.

—— its assumption of the power of legislation, tyranny over men's minds, and tortures of their bodies, iv. 10.

—— its abuse of the jurisdiction of the Church, iv. 11.

—— its corrupt discipline, censures and excommunications, iv. 12.

—— its unscriptural vows, iv. 13.

—— its sacrilegious mass an annihilation of the Lord's Supper, iv. 18.

—— its five ceremonies falsely called sacraments, proved not to be sacraments, iv. 19.

—— its characteristics of a false Church, iv. 2.

Penance, no sacrament, iv. 19.

Prayer, the principal exercise of faith, and the medium of our daily reception of divine blessings, iii. 20.

Predestination. *See* Election, iii. 21—24.

Priesthood of Christ, ii. 15.

Promises of the law and gospel, harmony between them, iii. 17.

Prophetical office of Christ, ii. 15.

Providence of God governs the world, i. 16.

—— proper application and utility of this doctrine, i. 17.

—— contracts no impurity from its control and use of the agency of the wicked, i. 18.

Purgatory exposed and disproved, iii. 5.

## R.

Reason furnishes proofs to establish the authority of the Scripture, i. 8.

Redemption necessary in consequence of the fall, ii. 1, 6.

—— to be sought only in Christ, ii. 6.

—— accomplished by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, ii. 16.

Regeneration, iii. 3.

Repentance, true, always accompanies true faith ; its origin, nature, and effects, iii. 3.

———— comprises mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit, iii. 6—10.

———— the sophistry and jargon of the schools on this subject very remote from the purity of the Gospel, iii. 4.

Reprobates, the destruction of, procured by themselves, iii. 24.

Resurrection of Christ, ii. 16.

———— final, iii. 25.

Reward promised, no proof of justification by works, iii. 18.

Roman See, primacy of, iv. 6.

## S.

Sabbath, ii. 8.

Sacraments in general, iv. 14.

———— in particular, iv. 15, 16.

———— ceremonies falsely called sacraments, iv. 19.

Sacrifices, legal, ii. 7.

———— none propitiatory under the gospel since that of Christ, iv. 18.

Saints, invocation and intercession of, iii. 20.

Salvation for lost man to be sought only in Christ, ii. 6.

———— procured by Christ, ii. 16.

Satisfactions exposed, iii. 4.

Schismatics, iv. 1.

Scripture, the guidance and teaching of it necessary to lead to the knowledge of God, i. 6.

———— the testimony of the Spirit requisite to its confirmation and establishment of its authority, i. 7.

———— the dependance of its authority on the judgment of the Church an impious fiction, i. 7.

———— rational proofs to establish its authority, i. 8.

———— rejection of it, under the pretence of resorting to immediate revelations, subversive of every principle of piety, i. 9.

———— exclusively opposes the true God to all the heathen deities, i. 10.

———— clearly distinguishes the true God from all fictitious ones, in the creation of the universe, i. 14.

———— teaches the unity of God, and the existence of three persons in the divine essence, i. 13.

## T.

Temptation, iii. 20.

Testament, Old, ii. 7.

Testament, New, ii. 9.

———— similarity of the Old and New, ii. 10.

———— difference of the Old and New, ii. 11. ✓

———— harmony between the promises of the Old and New,  
iii. 17.

———— sacraments of the Old and New, iv. 14.

Traditions, human, iv. 10.

Transubstantiation exposed, iv. 10.

V.

Vocation confirms election, iii. 24.

Vows ; the misery of rashly making them, iv. 13.

W.

Wicked, the agency of, controlled and used by God, i. 18.

Works merit no favour from God, iii. 15.

World created by God, i. 14.

———— preserved by his power, and governed by his providence,  
i. 16.

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	84	—	7,	read which would certainly, &c.
	101	—	22,	read due to despisers, &c.
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	109	—	28,	for is read appear.
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	136	—	32,	for his, read this.

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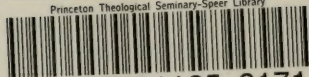












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